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G. W. E. ]

*HAIR SPLITTING AS A FINE ART*

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# LETTERS TO MY SON HERBERT

( FOURTH THOUSAND )

London

TINSLEY BROTHERS, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND

1882

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## LETTERS TO MY SON HERBERT.

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MY DEAR HERBERT,

Though not yet, I trust, within measurable distance of the great Issue, I may yet indulge a father's affection in leaving to you—alas! I have little else to bequeath—some words of precious counsel. I always feel a touch of pathos stealing on me as I give advice, and somehow it seems insensibly to take the shape of valediction. It is not for me, my dear boy, as I said on a late occasion, 'at my time of life, to anticipate those future years of strength and service which you are good enough to desire on my behalf;' but I am transferring to you for the moment what was addressed to a larger and more important audience. Your ear, my dear Herbert, is the one I have chosen into which to drop these words; because I think, as was said in a pleasant metaphor by the public, you are 'a chip of the old block'—not that I am so old, or a block, though as to yourself the expression is fairly correct; but because I have noticed in you what my old friend and countryman, Sir Pertinax, calls 'that modest cadence of body and a conciliatory co-operation of the whole man,' which is invaluable in politics. Something, I fancy, can be made of you. With your brother, W. H. G., alas! I can do little or nothing. There are trees which will turn the edge of the finest American axe. I am free

to confess—a favourite phrase of mine—that I am hopeless about him. He lacks *finesse*; he is heavy in touch; he calls a spade a spade. *I* never do! A spade for *me* may be, or may become such shape of tool as the occasion calls for. And this leads me at once to the single point I would impress on you, to the secret of success. TRUTH—that is, what *I* call truth.

You will see that I do not exactly mean the hackneyed sense imputed by the vulgar. That there is an elasticity in the words ‘the whole truth and nothing but the truth’ is well enough; but the ‘naked’ truth, as it is called, is often naked falsehood; because what *is*, is so curiously intermixed with what is *not*, that without due distinction or limitation it is impossible to predicate absolutely of anything. In political conduct, the blurting out the naked truth in this sense is utterly destructive. My dear Herbert, had I the powers of the ‘Hallelujah Cornet’ of the Salvationists, I would never cease performing that one simple tune. Hold by a generous unstinted measure of the TRUTH, in the sense I have laid it down; and, as I have ever held that a grain of illustration is worth a bushel of theory, I purpose in these few pages to distil for you the very essence of a life’s experience, not unmarked, too, by a slight modicum of success. There is nothing, indeed, within the space of human action that may not be illustrated in my own person and actions.

### § 1. *The Art of Saying Nothing in Many Words.*

In this I am a master, and a single perfect specimen, unmatched in the language, will do more to convey what I mean—perhaps what I don't mean, for I am nothing if not nebulous—than a volume.

Some time before I came into office a *communiqué* from me was sent to the papers, its purport being to show that I had been reported unfaithfully by certain French 'interviewers.' An ordinary political personage might convey his ideas somewhat after this fashion: 'The report in the *Figaro* and *Gaulois* is in the main accurate, though in some remarks on public men, etc., my meaning has been mistaken.' This would be far too general and gross. Something more obscure is required by the laws of my nature. I fancy it was a case of peculiar delicacy, where the meaning could only be conveyed subject to great qualifications and refinements akin to the division or sub-division of intellectual hairs. Here is my guarded protest, and I call on you to admire it:

*We are requested by Mr. Gladstone to state, with reference to certain interviews had on the part of French journals with him in Paris, that, while the reports given of those interviews in the French language bear testimony to the remarkable tact as well as accuracy of the reporters, there are certain passages, particularly some relating to public men and to contingencies in English politics, where, by deviations such as from the reporters' point of view appear insignificant, an effect is produced not in full harmony with Mr. Gladstone's intention.*

Now let us analyse this together. There were, first, 'certain,' i.e. hazy, interviews. What the journalistic

world is 'requested to state' is not concerned with anything so plain as my having had interviews with French reporters, but more guardedly 'with reference to.' Nor were these interviews held with reporters, but with persons 'on the part of the newspapers;' and those not of the *Figaro* and *Gaulois* (quite too particular), but merely 'on the part of French journals' generally. Having started with this significant 'reference to,' you would advance along the high-road of plain speaking, and without further delay come to the point? Not so: there are further qualifications. 'While the reports'—mark, not the reporters; for the distinction is important—'the reports given of these interviews in the French language' (this to guard against my words being strained to apply to English versions) are—for the most part correct? No, a very different thing; they are only valuable as indications of the spirit in which the writers undertook their task, for 'they bear testimony'—to what? the truth? No; to the particular qualities of '*tact* as well as accuracy;' rather *tact* than accuracy, as will be seen. Well, you may now fancy that we may take it that either report or reporters are fairly correct. But this is still going too fast and assuming far too much. It applies not to all, but to 'passages' only; and, as this is too broad, to 'certain passages;' and, qualifying still further, of those certain passages 'particularly some.' And what does 'particularly some' refer to? To men and politics: comprehensive categories enough. Yes, as *you* look at them. But that is not the way I put it. 'Public men,' forsooth!—rather, I mean what is 'relating to public men;' and as for politics, I would denote 'contingencies in English politics.' Well, having fined the thing down to this point, you may think yourself entitled to assume that the little residuum is untrue,



and that the reporters, who are admittedly 'accurate,' and nicely accurate, for they have reported with 'tact,' are, *as to the balance*, inaccurate. But granting the whole—qualifications, refinements, all—you will ask, What is the statement I wish to put on record? Is it that the report is true, untrue, or slightly incorrect, subject, of course, to limitations? No, I would not go so far as that. Would I say that an *effect* of incorrectness is produced? Nothing of the kind. There are 'deviations' merely. And from what?—the truth? moral rectitude? No, 'deviations' from anything or nothing. And, mark again: as to these deviations—let us call them 'insignificant.' Why trouble about them, then? a rude commentator will say. Ah, but note the form used 'might appear' so—to the reporters themselves; for I do not commit myself to asserting the deviations to be so insignificant. Possibly I think them of importance, so I will take leave to qualify again—deviations which, 'from *their* point of view, appear insignificant;' though of course if anything does appear insignificant to a class of persons, it must be from 'their point of view.' The result is—and at last we reach it—that even *that* is far too much, and goes beyond what I would convey. For the 'effect' does not correspond with my intention. But mark again: I do not say that '*they*' produced the effect, but simply that such effect *is* produced, so that nobody may be responsible, after all. Nor will I say, indeed, that the report does *not* represent actually what took place, or what I said. It does not reflect my *intention*. So that, in the end, it is actually right as a report of what was *said*, and what more can mere fallible reporters do? They cannot 'take' intentions in shorthand. They may be right and I wrong. Nor will I take on me to

say even that the effect does not correspond with that intention—it is ‘not in harmony’ with it ; and when I say ‘not in harmony,’ I must qualify for the last time, because it *may* be in harmony to a *certain* extent ; so I use the word ‘*full*’—‘full harmony’ !

## § 2. *How to Acknowledge a Tankard and Six Goblets.*

There is an art in doing such a thing elegantly—and I ever aim at what may be termed ‘the round-about’ in doing so. Bright or another would say, ‘Accept my hearty thanks,’ or simply, ‘I thank you for——’ Not so I.

DEAR SIR,—Allow me to convey to you the expression of my warm acknowledgments for the valuable and interesting gift which you have presented to me on behalf of the Bristol Operatives’ Liberal Association.

That is (1) ‘Allow me’—of course they *expected* me to do so, but this is more courteous—(2) ‘to convey to you’—this gives a tangibility, as though it were something packed up and transported, like the goblet and tankards—(3) ‘the expression of’—we have not got to it yet—(4) ‘my warm’ what ?—here it is at last—(5) ‘acknowledgments’—and *pause* for (6) ‘the valuable’ and (7) ‘interesting gift’—*i.e.*, goblet and six tankards—which (8) ‘you have presented to me’ (9) ‘on behalf of,’ etc. And thus at last I reach the donors. Next I declare myself ‘unworthy’ of the goblet and tankards ; but I feel reassured when I think how good and noble those who gave the tankard and goblets are. This may seem a trite sentiment, but note how it is put—(1) ‘If there is any alloy to the satisfaction with which I receive it, certainly there is none other than such as arises from a

misgiving as to my worthiness to be the object of such a presentation.' Now this is a fine specimen of my manner ; all rests on an 'if.' I like that phrase, '*there is none other than such as—*' And is there not a novel chemical association in 'an alloy arising from a misgiving : ' and note the happily balanced qualification in the receiver, '*such as arises from a misgiving as to my worthiness to be the object of such—?*' But to go on. The satisfaction thus materially diminished by the sense of personal abasement, I restore the balance by compliment. 'On the other hand, my pleasure is enhanced when I consider of how many independent and upright minds it represents the favourable judgment.'

### § 3. *The Art of Taking Leave, so as to Stay on.*

In the French theatres they have a device used in the case of a performer whose favour seems to be on the wane. It is called a *sifflet à succès*: a man being sent in by the administration to hiss, which acts as a challenge to the better-disposed of the audience, who applaud vociferously. A lesson can be drawn from this. When I notice a certain flagging in my admirers, I have found it ever useful to say 'Farewell'—to *say*, observe, not take an actual leave; and you would be surprised how often I have done this, and with the most happy results. Three times, I think, within four or five years.

The first was when I solemnly laid down the command of the Party, taking the high pious ground that I wanted the short fragment of life left me to get ready my soul for the next world. It was like Coriolanus to *his* following—'I banish *you*!' I said pathetically, 'At the age of sixty-five,' and 'after forty-two years of a

laborious life,' I was fairly entitled to repose. 'And'—mark this—'this retirement is dictated to me by my personal view as to the best method of spending the closing years of my life.'

Now, my dear boy, I confess to you candidly after the event that I was a little hasty here, and, for once, too large and distinct in the formula used. Not but that I could make some of my fine distinctions, proving that retirement was not intended : it was 'dictated' to me—and by a 'view,' not a mere '*personal* view,' and that referring only to the 'best' method. There might be all the time other 'good' and 'better' views ; and why not those of the community, which, with modesty I hint, might know more of the matter than I did? Still I own the effect was left of something too absolute and distinct, that I wished to go and spend the measurable term that remained to me in suitable preparation for the next world. Suddenly the air cleared. The country pronounced for me. I was brought back within the range of practical politics.

Connected, almost directly, with this valedictory mood is another little matter. I own it was always with something akin to mortification that I thought of my having to accept a refuge at that miserable little borough of Greenwich—another man making room for me. Indeed, there has been always something degrading to the country in this chapter of my election and in the mode of it. I, the most conspicuous man in it, having had to abandon Oxford and South Lancashire, and to retire to Greenwich, and actually to fight, at great cost, for Midlothian!

So, in 1878, when elections were spoken of as imminent, I determined to make my *cong  *, and have a really proper seat ; it gnawed my vitals to be in community with the



man Boord as colleague. But the worthy creatures had done their best, and I could not tell them, after having used them so long—ten years—that they were not exactly suitable. The way to do this sort of thing is to make it have the air of an obligation under which you lay them, and hint at retirement and failing strength. I think it a really clever letter.

‘MY DEAR SIR’ (I wrote to one Jolly, of the place),—‘For years past I have felt, in an increasing degree, that it was not in my power to discharge sufficiently all the duties which the constituency of Greenwich may with reason expect one of its representatives to perform. This sense of disability, I need hardly add, is likely to grow rather than to diminish.’

Now, see first the great compliment, to the vast and important constituency of Greenwich, with its tremendous duties, which I ‘could not *discharge sufficiently*.’ Note the phrase—not ‘attend to,’ or ‘perform.’ This feeling had been pressing for ‘years past.’ The ‘sense of disability,’ I ‘need hardly add,’ would increase rather than diminish. What tremendous duties, as you will guess, dear boy, were involved, and what an awful responsibility troubled my peace and conscience! I could not bear it an hour longer; especially when I think now of what a large county like Midlothian entails, and which sits lightly enough. In these sort of things I am at my best. I then tell, as it were in their interest, that an election may come at any moment, that they should be prepared for a candidate. I don’t say that I mean to ‘stand’ anywhere myself, but I was thinking solely of *them*, and sacrificing myself. The whole letter is worthy of study.

Finally, in the last year of grace, 1881, I again found it necessary to utter the pathetic note of retirement, and

once more ‘trot out,’ as it is called, that now favourite nag, ‘Make-my-soul.’ ‘It is not,’ I said at Leeds, ‘for me at my time of life and nearness to its inevitable close to anticipate those future years of strength and service which you are good enough to desire on my behalf; but yet, though I do not indulge in any such anticipation at all, though I confess I think *that repose of mind and reflection on other matters are more appropriate to the latest stage of our human existence*, yet I do not on that account look forward with the slightest lack of confidence to your future as the Liberal party of this country. I know that when I depart I shall hand over the charge that is now entrusted to me to other hands.’ You see, the same notes—the same old fiddle; yet no engagement—no undertaking of any kind. The herd, as they read, think, ‘He will leave us; his strength is failing; he will retire to prayer and good works.’ But the real meaning is, ‘I’ll hold on while I live; after me Granville, Hartington and Co. can carry on the business.’ No partner in a firm can predicate more of himself. It is, in short, ‘a platitude,’ my boy. Note, too, the clever and artistic *non sequitur*, ‘*Though I can’t hope for much more life, though I am very old and duty tells me I ought to retire and make my soul, still*’—what ought to follow? Why, that ‘I will work on in my weak state, cling to office even at the expense of that higher duty which calls on me to look after my spiritual condition.’ But that, you see, would sound odd. So I adroitly shift the consequence: ‘I do not look forward with the slightest lack of confidence to your future as the Liberal party of the country.’ All the time I don’t say that I *will* retire, or that I will ‘make my soul.’ And I add grandly (another platitude), ‘I know that when I depart I shall hand over the charge that is entrusted to me to

*other hands.*' That must be done, I own to you, do what I will ; when ' I depart ' I can't take it with me. Some of the stupids, to tell you the truth, wanted something clearer, and the *Central News*—I think they might have let it alone—desired to know *was* I going, and when, etc. A simple telegram put the matter on its proper footing.

' *There is nothing of any kind to be added to my public declaration on the subject.*'

That is, it was very properly not to be removed from the original state of fog.

#### § 4. *Art of Repudiating Old Inconvenient Utterances.*

One who has spoken and written so much as I have during ' the forty-five years ' and more of my political life, and on such myriads of occasions where my feelings dictated, must have naturally put on the register, as it were, innumerable things that I could wish erased, as newer altered feelings supervened. For such cases, brought forward by intrusive meddlers, I must be prepared. There are various effective receipts for dealing with such.

(a) Wholesale denial. A good instance is the following :

Once a person wrote of me that ' I had sided with the South ' during the Civil War. He found something to the effect that I had stated that ' the Southerners had made themselves a nation.' He quoted me : ' We know quite well that the people of the Northern States have not yet drunk the cup—the cup which all the rest of the world see nevertheless they must drink of. There is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army ; they are making, it appears, a navy ; and what is more than either—they have made themselves a nation.' Again : ' I cannot but believe

that the event—the separation of the North—is as certain as any event yet future or contingent can be.’ This I own *was* ‘siding with the South.’ ‘For what does it amount to?’ asked the man. ‘Mr. Gladstone, after repeating that the North must be beaten, adds that “the Confederation which has been formed under Mr. Jefferson Davis has shown itself to be sufficiently supplied with the elements which make a nation, and with the will and power to defend its independent existence.”’ This declaration, he insisted, made me contradict the declaration of my colleagues, and that, so far from having explained my Newcastle speech (as I asserted) ‘in a sense contrary to’ that which I had attached to it, it only corroborated it. Now this prophecy unfulfilled, of the separation of North and South ‘*as certain as any event yet future or contingent,*’ was a very unlucky one. Another would have owned in dispute that he was wrong and no prophet. Not so I. I said: ‘It *was simply false* to declare that I sided with the South.’ My words had also been ‘wrested from the context’ (a useful, faithful ally this, of which more later).

(b) Deny the accuracy of the report. Here is an instructive instance. A man from Glasgow, pressing me on the Clerkenwell utterance, fished up an answer of mine to Hardy. That Tory had asked why I did not deal with the Irish Church in 1866, when Fenianism was rampant, and I answered, ‘for a perfectly plain and simple reason. In the first place, circumstances were not ripe then as they are now. Circumstances, I repeat, were not ripe, *in so far as we did not then know so much as we know now with respect to the intensity of Fenianism.*’

This, you see, rather awkwardly fortified the ‘practical politics’ declaration. It virtually said that ‘if the intensity of Fenianism’ had been sufficient, the



question would *then* have been ripe for dealing with. Of course I could take a distinction on the words 'in so far,' which is different from 'since' or 'because,' and which indeed imparts a happy air of mist. But note what I do. 'The reports you quote were not, I believe, in any case corrected by me.' Escobar himself could not have put this better. You see the theory is clearly laid down that the point is not what I *actually have said*, but what I wish to stand recorded. Such must be 'corrected;' these were not so corrected—that is, 'I believed not,' or they *may* have been in some cases. This, however, only refers to unessential matter, for as to the Fenian pressure, I deny that it influenced me. Another would let that stand then, but I add the convincing reason, 'since it would not be true.' In other and more feminine form, 'It isn't true, because it isn't.' And why? Because my opinion was opposed to the Irish Church long before the Clerkenwell outrage. Note the ingenious *non sequitur* here. The point in dispute is, what event *prompted* my taking *action*, not what I felt, or when I felt it. To tell you the truth I cannot clearly explain what is exactly the meaning of '*a public acquaintance with the intensity of Fenianism*,' unless in so far that it offers vast openings for refinements of denial; for I could repudiate having '*a public acquaintance with an intensity*,' and yet be acquainted with Fenianism in its public aspect. I fancy it is a circumlocution for the Clerkenwell explosion. You may also note, 'with thanks, yours, faithful and obedient, W. E. G.' The whole ran: 'I entirely and literally *recognise* the sentiments they contain as my own, except that in regard to the last I do not own myself to have said that a public acquaintance with the intensity of Fenianism had governed my conduct as to Ireland, since this would not have been true.

My opinion adverse to the existence of the Irish Church as an establishment was declared in Parliament long before the outrages in Manchester and Clerkenwell.'—With thanks, yours, faithful and obedient, W. E. GLADSTONE.

(c) Ignore the inconsistency; but hint from generosity you prefer not to re-open the matter, as it might be worse for the party. Thus *in re* Suez Canal shares, De Worms revived my declaration that the purchase of the Suez Canal shares was a 'delusion' and a 'financial operation of a ridiculous description,' and asked impudently whether, 'seeing that the present value of the Suez Canal shares is officially stated to be £8,826,000, I proposed to take steps for realising by their sale the accrued profit of £4,000,000 odd.' Now I never made a more adroit reply. Study every word of it. 'My objection to a question of this kind is, that if a person is not prepared to confess, he can hardly do otherwise than seem to revive objections to which I do not think it necessary to go back. But I would simply draw the distinction that all the censure which I bestowed on the operation had no reference to the financial operation, considered as a financial operation—(cheers)—conceived and executed by a stockbroker. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I never took any objection of that kind. I had been from the very first a recommender and promoter of the Suez Canal. (Cheers.) All the objections I have taken to it I have taken *as to a complex operation*; and, so viewing it, it would be invidious to repeat epithets. *Yet I cannot recede from them.*'

I said, you see, it was 'a financial operation of a ridiculous description;' yet deny having said it was a 'financial operation.' No one had said I objected to the canal itself; but I vaunt, amid obsequious cheers, that I was ever a firm supporter of it, and an encourager of

Lesseps. What *did* I say then? That 'it was a *complex operation.*' There was a fine inscrutability about this that shall never be pierced. I approved the Canal. I seem, too, to approve this financial operation. What I *did* take objection to was '*as to a complex operation.*' If you desire to know what this meant, better press me not; 'yet—*so* viewing it, it would be invidious to repeat epithets.' But I adhere to them all the same, though they apply to something unexplained. 'Yet I cannot *recede* from them'—a quaint phrase.

(*d*) Never retract; but, as in the last instance, insinuate that worse is behind, and that you had rather not re-open the matter. Take Bartle Frere's recent case when I charged him with being an advocate of 'the policy of advance,' which developed in the invasion of Afghanistan, and also with responsibility for the previous measures in South Africa, as the unsafe adviser who knew not the spirit by which the British Government, etc. Frere declared that he had never advocated 'the policy of advance;' that he had nothing to do with the Annexation of the Transvaal. On which I wrote, that this person's complaints 'were based on errors of fact' (thus turning the tables on *him*)—and I indignantly presume 'that no one could so grossly misunderstand me as to suppose I connected you with the deplorable measures taken in Afghanistan' by Lord Lytton; but *I believe* 'you were favourable to the policy of advance.' The reason for charging him publicly with this, was, you will agree with me, ingeniously original—'to give my opponents fair play, by allowing *them the benefit of your high authority.*' Note the cynical raillery of this. It is as though I accused a number of persons of being directors of a swindling financial concern, and included some respectable merchant in the charge, on

the ground of 'giving them fair play, by allowing them the benefit of his high authority.' As to the Transvaal charge, my opinion of his general policy was 'very decided;' though I before owned that I did hold him responsible for the annexation, I handsomely 'regretted' that he had been wounded by these utterances, etc. As he was still not satisfied, I, in another letter, refer to the 'policy of advance' matter; as to which I do not retract, but say distinctly, 'Receiving your assurance that this is an error, I am—' what? satisfied? withdraw the charge? no—but 'naturally much gratified; and if you regard *my erroneous admission* as a wrong to you, I am quite willing to express my regret for having, in the manner I have described, been *led into the error*.' '*Led into error*,' observe, and 'in the manner described.' He is welcome to that much. I go on: 'With regard to South Africa, my object has been to lean as much as I could to you and your views. Were I further to develop my views, it would not improve the matter. *I have not anything to retract*, but I have the greatest pleasure in repeating my acknowledgment of your high character, your long experience,' etc.

(e) The *passage has been garbled—strained from the context*; as in the case of the appointment of Lord Ripon to be Viceroy of India, and of Lord Kenmare to be Lord Chamberlain—both Roman Catholics. In the heat of that old exciting controversy, now merged in the past, when I so effectively belaboured the Roman Catholics, I had said many things which were opportune and serviceable, *at the moment*. And one of those teasing fellows who write to the papers, pressed me with my registered declaration that 'no Roman Catholic' (or convert, I think) 'was fit to be trusted with an office in England, as he had abdicated his conscience and put it



in the keeping of another.' I own I was somewhat put to it for an excuse. But there is a formula for such cases. I said that the words 'taken apart from the context' might bear that meaning; but they should be read in connection with pages 33 and 56, or some such figures. (I did not give the passage.) They had been 'garbled,' in short. The plainest statement, such as 'This coat is black,' may be thus read 'with the context' when later it becomes convenient to have it 'brown.' Another, who impudently wished me to reconcile past and present statements on the same subject, I told 'that I had wholly discharged my mind of the question.'

(f) Admit the record, but have no memory of the circumstance. Thus when some one quotes an old speech of mine—nigh fifty years old!—to this effect: 'The noble lord (Lord Russell) invited them to invade the property of the Church of Ireland. He considered that there were abundant reasons for maintaining that Church, and if it should be removed he believed they would not be able long to resist the Repeal of the Union, and then they would become fully aware of the evil of surrendering the principle which the noble lord called upon them to give up.'

See how simply I dispose of the whole affair.

'Mr. Gladstone wishes me to say that *he has no recollection* of expressing the opinion which you quote as attributed to him in 1835; *but it is quite possible that he did express it*. It was a traditional and fixed opinion among those who were at the time his leaders in politics. Mr. Gladstone thinks that you will not find any such expression from him within the last thirty-five or forty years.'

Such are the divisions of this useful department. Go over them carefully.

§ 5. *How to be both for and against Vaccination.*

Sometimes when I take a fit of introspection, I am really lost in wonder at my own mind—its fertility—its ceaseless activity ; the rush of idea and arguments in favour of *every* side of the question, which almost oppresses me when I what is called ‘turn over’ a matter. Nor do I deny that occasionally there may be contradiction. Those ‘three courses,’ a phrase so often quoted offensively, really express that state of acceptance, or feeling, in which I find myself. An ingenious, fluctuating train of thought, though against the stock principles of party, often seduces me. I frankly confess I do not see why I should not be at liberty to adopt three courses, or, for that matter, six, if the occasion calls. I am never for those hard and fast lines—in my own case, I mean. I am free to confess that I see questions in so many rich lights, and can colour them with views of so original a cast, that for the time I am fascinated, as it were, by my own creations and become a temporary convert. But to the point or points, and I will commence at once with my illustrations. Do you remember, my dear Herbert, some years ago how the question of the compulsoriness of vaccination was stirred? I was embarrassed in the way just described. You and W. H. G. and Mrs. G. and the Convalescent Home, have all undergone the process : if foregone, we are within a measurable distance of small-pox. But the opponents have important political support ; thus it seemed to me that reasonable objection might be taken to the compulsion. Compulsion is a serious matter. And yet, unless compelled, how are the vulgar to be got to vaccinate? In this nicely balanced condition of things, I had to return a post-card answer to the pressing inquiry for my opinion. Mark it, Herbert,

analyse it carefully ; for it is indeed a model. ‘I regard,’ I said, ‘compulsory and penal provisions, such as those of the Vaccination Act, with mistrust and misgiving ; and were I engaged on an inquiry, I should require very clear proof of their necessity before giving them my approval.’ Thus far, you see, I seem to be with the *anti-vaccinationists*. You and they will naturally think I am committed to them. But see what an adroit master can do. Note first, that the thing itself is not disapproved of. I do disapprove not of absolute vaccination, but ‘of compulsory and penal provisions’ (in general we all do) ‘*such* as those of the Vaccination Act.’ It is reduced to be the species of a genus—a good receipt for supplying the requisite nebulousity. Then, I, the *το εγω*, merely ‘regard’—an indifferent mood—regard it with ‘mistrust and misgiving.’ The natural course, however, for removing this mistrust would be to ‘inquire’ into the matter, when, between ourselves, the ‘misgiving and mistrust’ would, of course, go by the board. But I guard against this issue : for I declare solemnly that on such inquiry I should require very clear proof before giving my approval. This sounds well, but it is a mere truism. For on every such question you should have satisfactory proof before giving your approval. Now I must think of the vaccinators—an important political interest—and knowing what the result of an inquiry would be, I add, ‘but I am (1) not able (2) to undertake (3) to enter (4) upon an examination of the question.’ I don’t say ‘I can’ examine the question ;’ but profess an ‘inability of undertaking to enter on what is to be examined in the question.’ Oh, my dear Herbert, study—study this little letter again and again, and see the apparent conclusion which has really no conclusion or meaning.

Once more a pithy analysis of this analysis, for your good. It amounts to no more than this. Compulsion in general, with punishment, should only be inflicted when necessary, and I don't know whether it is necessary here, as I haven't time to inquire. Thus, as you read, you think I am protesting vehemently against forcing a poor man to, etc. : and for the moment pass as an anti-vaccinator. When the occasion has gone by, and some fool twits me with this, I give the explanation I have given you ; and I am, of course, found right and opposed to all change.

But I had more to say on this interesting topic. Again, dear Herbert, would that I had lived in the days of the Schoolmen ! How I could have argued that famous *crux*, 'How many angels could dance on the point of a needle,' with a subtlety that would have delighted the Doctors ! Bear in mind, that what I wished was to keep both sides in suspense, and to hold the door open and shut *at the same moment*. I wrote again :

SIR,—The question of Vaccination is one to which I have never been able to give—'attention'? no ; 'special attention'? no—'a special attention'? yes.

I thus form a division, sub-division, and sub-sub-division, or rather genus, species, and sub-species :

1. Attention, comprising
2. *Special* attention, and
3. *A* special attention.

Thus to you, my dear boy, I give attention ; to your dear mother special attention ; to myself *a* special attention.

But to resume : 'Nor have I *even* an opportunity of doing so.' Of course this is implied in my first declarations, for 'I have never been able' and 'I have no

opportunity'—I beg pardon—'nor have I even an opportunity,' are pretty much the same. But it all clouds—it clouds, dear boy. Well this favourite expression of ignorance, with the reason for it, might be supposed to conclude the matter. No. My ignorance is superior to anyone else's knowledge. 'At the same time'—always note this creaking of the door, significant it is about to be open and shut. '*At the same time* (1) I view (2) with misgiving (3) all (4) new (5) aggressions (6) upon private (7) liberty. I do not dislike nor oppose, but 'view'—and view with 'doubt'—'aggressions'? no, but '*new* aggressions'—not on liberty, but on '*private* liberty.' Here are exceptions enough to save the Grand Qualifier, as I may style myself. I could fancy the worthy anti-vaccinators thinking so far it had the 'true ring.' I won't see them dragged to court, fined, and imprisoned. But note my sly '*except*,' which follows: 'Except upon a clear and certain proof of necessity.' Of course, my dear H., no serious step of any kind should be taken without 'a clear and certain proof of its necessity:' in fact, this belongs to what the vulgar call *platitudes*—most valuable things in their way, which I would think twice, aye, thrice, before abolishing. Suppose some of these men, or some Tory, pressed me hereafter with this: 'You said you were against an aggression on our liberty, 'such as this is.' No, my friend, I could answer, I said, 'new aggressions;' this is old. I said 'private' liberty; now this refers to public liberty: and even suppose your contention right, note my grand '*EXCEPT*,' which limits further my qualified adhesion, viz., 'on a clear, etc.' And what follows is a magnificent specimen of a truly noble platitude:

'AND I KEEP MY MIND OPEN TO THE QUESTION WHETHER



SUCH PROOF HAS NOT BEEN SUPPLIED ON THE MATTER OF VACCINATION.' How solemn and impressive this if read out slowly. You might be listening to me at Hawarden reading the lesson in my surplice. 'I'll keep my mind open.' Ha! ha! I could turn a little pleasant parody on it:

"Repeal vaccination, sirs," I said,  
 "Repeal vaccination, sirs," I said;  
 "I feel almost faint  
 At the notion, Restraint,  
 But I'll keep my mind open, sirs," I said.'

Not bad. Note also the sly *équivoque* in the *matter* of vaccination, which extorted one of her sad 'Convalescent Home' smiles from your dear mother.

### § 6. *How to Send Away with a Flea in the Ear.*

You recollect those old days of enthusiasm, when the mobs—honest, greasy rogues—used to come out to Hawarden and see me fell a tree *coram publico*. There they clustered in their thousands, looking on, as I, in my shirt-sleeves—but insufficiently assisted by W. H. G.—made the splinters fly as I whirled my axe. A good subject for a picture. I was surprised that what is called a subscription was not set on foot by the more enthusiastic. It seems strange indeed that with all this enormous popularity, shoutings, etc., that the thing has not taken some more substantial shape of testimonial. After a while, between you and me, these visits became a nuisance. The excursionists spread themselves over the grounds; kept prying in at the windows. Mrs. G. loudly objected. The novelty of the thing too passed by, and I remarked the Press grew languid. The embarrassment was how to withdraw. The way was to put the revocation on the ground of principle and

example. So, mark : 'Experience,' I wrote, 'has shown that an essentially public character inevitably attaches to excursions' to Hawarden, and 'the proceeding assumes the aspect of an exhibition of domestic life, to the world at large, such as does not, and, I am compelled to admit, ought not, to meet with general approval.'

Observe the first sentence, how 'experience' works in the matter, and how 'character' is not only 'essentially public,' but 'inevitably attaches.' The excursion then becomes 'a proceeding,' and is transformed marvellously. *You* might mean to say it interferes with family privacy. Not so I. The public character 'inevitably attaches to excursions.' (1) The 'proceeding'—*is?* no ; *becomes?* no—(2) but 'assumes the aspect'—*i.e.*, appears to have (3) 'of an exhibition'—(4) and a peculiar exhibition, viz., of 'domestic life.' Further, it is not merely an 'exhibition,' but one to 'the world,' and not only to the world, but to 'the *world at large*.' And this again must be minutely qualified. The excursion, thus originally complicated, having become, you see, 'a proceeding,' which again has become 'an exhibition,' how is it to be viewed by me and others? It is a thing 'such as does not meet with approval'—no, 'general approval.' That would be right ; but I add, 'ought not to meet.' That I was obliged to add, because they would say, 'Never mind the general approval, if *you* like it.' But here again I can escape, for I insert, 'I am *compelled* to admit.'

§ 7. *To Run with the Publican Hare, and ride with the 'Local Option' Hounds.*

Not long ago the temperance people in a highly inconvenient way pressed me about their 'Local Option.' It would not do to repudiate them, nor yet could I

encourage them. On one side were the publicans, on the other Lawson and his tribe. Here is an occasion for economised truth. The answer ran: 'With respect to local option'—a good opening—'Mr. Gladstone (1) has never (2) taken an objection, (3) in principle, to a (4) considerate (5) recognition of it.' Study this form, my dear boy, and it is perfectly beautiful in its generality. Here are a half-dozen doors of issue. (1) The objection is thrown back into the misty past. 'I have never hitherto objected,' but I may do now; if not now, it is open to me in future. There is also a fine shade of distinction between objecting and 'taking an objection' the 'taking' is much milder, and likely to be got over. But here I qualify even so much: (3) 'in principle;' mark, a nobly expansive word. And this my 'taking objection' limited to principle only applies to what? Not to Local Option, but to a '*recognition*' of it, which who shall define? and which does not mean bringing in or supporting a Bill. Even this mild '*recognition*' seemed to me too coarse a word, so I qualified it by '*considerate*.' It must be a '*considerate* recognition.' Between ourselves, my dear boy, I do not know what this phrase means: it will probably be taken for 'well considered.' But that indistinctness is all in all, and the beauty of the whole. I am really proud of these sort of exercises, and I think you could do nothing better than study carefully and analyse this little specimen practising yourself in imitations. But I am not done with it. Thus far you see I *apparently* favour the Local Optionists. Now as to the publicans. This for them: 'The circumstances of the present Session are singularly unfavourable to the introduction of matters not already before Parliament.' In plain terms, I won't make them favourable, or let it be discussed. I venture to say that

in these two texts there is enough matter for whole speeches on *both* sides of the question. Of course the point was, what would I do supposing the question introduced? 'The rest is silence.'

Some troublesome people of the same sect—I mean of the same party—again pressed me 'to abolish grocers' licences' for the sale of drink. Now here I wish, as before, to be with both sides. So: 'You are aware,' I wrote, 'that the subject has recently been *under public examination*, and for one I shall attach very great weight to the result of *independent* and *authoritative inquiry*.'

'Under public examination;' 'great weight;' 'independent;' 'authoritative.' These are brave words. But the issue may be either way; and what my view is, is not expressed. And still, the door of exit is there. For the inquiry, if I find it necessary to take objection, must answer my conditions, and be 'independent and authoritative.' In truth, I don't say I will adopt it *then*. I merely say I will '*attach very great weight*' to it; and then it doesn't follow that I will take any step. I may 'attach great weight,' and remain perfectly quiet. The foolish water-drinkers will, however, think that nothing can be fairer. Of course, you know the idea of *my* favouring taking away grocers' licenses is out of the question. But note the rest: 'The object of the measure undoubtedly was to *promote temperance*, by relieving persons from the necessity of going to the public-house, when in want of alcoholic liquors for domestic uses.'

Here observe a specimen of my abundant style. You wish to say, 'Prevent people fetching drink from the public-house.' How far more imposing the form, '*Relieve* persons from the necessity of going to the public-houses, *when in want of alcoholic liquors for*

*domestic uses.* 'Mobled Queen, that is good !' says old Polonius.

A ballad writer named Bennett—but a constituent—chose to send me a petition to present for 'The Female Suffrage Bill.' Well enough in its way, but he chose to add, that 'Short Parliaments' and equal 'Electoral Districts' should be henceforth insisted on. 'I will readily,' I tell him with alacrity, 'present your petition,' etc. This is formal ; but do I tell him anything of what I think ? 'I am not prepared to go *the whole length of the Bill*, but I have heretofore expressed my opinion that *a change* ought to be made in the present law.' You see this means anything : 'change'—covering everything. And as to anything positive, he is welcome to this : 'As regards the state of our Parliamentary representation, I *am doubtful* whether the disadvantages of more frequent elections might not outweigh the good. The present Parliament is not in harmony with the country, but its case is a rare one.' I am not doubtful at all. But as to the distribution of seats, I can cordially make up, or *appear* to make up, for my 'abstention,' or *apparent* hesitation (for, 'seems,' 'believes,' 'inclines to believe,' 'so far as regards,' 'I am free to confess,' 'in reference to,' are my necessary stock phrases), and I declare to them their plan deserves—my support? no—'my most *serious consideration*.' All the man has got, in short, is :

1. I can't go the 'whole length of the Bill,' which may be made to mean, going no length of it at all.

2. *But*, long ago I said that 'a change' ought to be made—what this change, I leave indistinct.

3. As to representation, I am 'doubtful.'

4. As to 'seats,' etc., I will give 'the most serious consideration.'



§ 8. *Art of Condoling with a Political Opponent.*

I must say that it is always with feelings akin to humiliation that I recall the undignified puerile exhibition the public made on the occasion of the demise of that very ordinary person the late Earl of Beaconsfield. It seemed time-degrading—some might call it idiotic. If this be the display in the case of mediocrity, there is no overplus for genius. But it is over now. I thought it becoming to fall in with the humour of the times, and addressed a letter to his favourite henchman, Rowton :

‘It was with sad surprise, after more favourable accounts of successive days, down to yesterday morning, that I learned this day at an early hour the decease of Lord Beaconsfield, which will be regarded with so much mournful interest throughout the country and beyond its limits.

‘In conformity with the message I have already sent, I desire at once to inform you and his executors that, if it should be agreeable to their wishes, I shall be prepared to give the necessary directions for a public funeral.

‘In tendering this honour, on the part of the Government, I feel assured that I am acting in conformity with the general expectation and desire.

‘I remain, etc.’

Now in this, let me take you, by steps, through this communication—virtually take you by steps through my own mind. 1. I wished to explain that I was—or rather appeared to be—both surprised and sorry for the death, which I supposed the country would feel much—a conventional matter enough, but in my hands how original it becomes ! There is first surprise ; but it

is requisite to involve it: it came after 'favourable' accounts, 'more' favourable—that is, in comparison—'of the successive days;' limited carefully, however, 'down to yesterday morning.' Then I make the surprise also 'sad.' This much is antecedent to the surprise. Then for the reception of the news: (1) 'I learned' (2) 'this day' (3) 'at an early hour' the 'decease'—not death—which 'decease' will be 'regarded'—a good neutral word—nothing about 'felt,' or 'being a shock.' Nor will the 'regarding' nation, I hinted, feel anything more than—grief? no—sorrow? no—'interest?' yes, interest, which, like my surprise, will be 'sad' also: and this interest will be felt, not '*by* the whole nation,' but 'throughout' the nation. And not by other nations, or the whole of Europe and America at the least, but '*beyond its limits.*' A choice, happy phrase, committing to nothing. Only a dozen 'beyond the limits' might suffer this mild<sup>n</sup> afflatus of 'mournful interest,' and it would be a correct description.

### § 9. *On my own Powers of Humour.*

I often think that humour is my real point. Of some complimentary remarks on this score made recently by the *Daily News*, always appreciative of my powers, it is not for me to pass an opinion; but I am free to confess that they appear to me just and not overcharged. I quote them, and what gave rise to them: 'Mr. Gladstone has been showing his mastery in a style of oratory which has until lately been little in his mood. But of late he has added to these gifts a playful humour and an irony which has more of good nature and compassion in it than of bitterness. But he rather plays with his antagonists than attacks them, and knocks them over and rolls them about with a kindly carefulness not to

hurt them. *Mr. Gladstone's eloquence seems to have entered upon what we may call its Odyssey stage. There is a kind of sunset mildness and serenity about it which suits his age and position. His answer to Mr. Ashmead-Bartlett was an example of the way of dealing with a not overwise or too modest Parliamentary youth which may serve as a model of considerate and kindly castigation.'*

Now, what drew forth this humour was a jejune speech of this gentleman's, and I confess in replying to him I felt myself in wonderful vein, playing with the subject in a delightful (I may so call it, for it gave tumultuous delight to all around), buoyant strain. I was indeed surprised myself. I could have gone on for an hour. There was one metaphor of a medical—or, to speak more accurately, of a physiological nature—pursued and carried out with entrancing variety for many minutes, and which seems to me somewhat after the manner of Swift. 'I hope the hon. gentleman will reserve some portion of his eloquence until that future comes more clearly into view—(laughter)—for at present undoubtedly it is somewhat in the same case as the Spanish fleet of which it was said—

“The Spanish fleet thou can'st not see,  
Because it is not yet in sight.”

(Laughter.) On the whole, I think I am not wrong in ascribing the speech of the hon. gentleman to the increasing and intolerable pains of prolonged retention. (Loud laughter.) All these stores he has been engaged in amassing, I believe, since the accession to power of the present Government, and when I consider *the nature of the materials that he has been taking in*—(laughter)—materials *not of genial food* for the mind, but of ideas

and notions which are of the most painful and poisonous character, all intended to be vented no doubt upon his antagonists, and which *probably might have been so vented without inconvenience to himself* if he had had an early opportunity, I cannot be surprised that he has found himself unable *longer to retain, without distraction* to his mind itself in which they were stored, matter of such description; and I see that consequently it was *not choice but necessity* which compelled him to make the speech he has delivered. (Laughter.) The hon. gentleman says that I have at some period or other affected to feel an interest in the British Empire—(laughter)—and that this affectation to feel an interest in the British Empire has excited great surprise among my friends. (Renewed laughter.) Well, sir, I wish to leave that observation—and, indeed, my wish would have been to leave all the observations of the hon. gentleman free course throughout the whole world, to circulate and distil themselves, if they could or would, into the minds of civilised mankind, *in order that the digestions of the various cultivated races might dispose of them in the proper manner.* (Laughter.)

No wonder the *Daily News*—a very faithful, honest paper—was exultant! That ‘retention’ metaphor is exceedingly happy, and also cleverly maintained.

Connected also with this emotion of humour are some little scenes of an almost quaint Rabelaisian flavour. You recall that evening at six o’clock, when the famous ‘hat’ incident took place. The faithful *Daily News*, which sometimes verges on the obsequious, and excites ribaldry, describes me as ‘rising to a point of order, and attempting’—here you have one of his foolish phrases—‘to address the House. He was met by loud shouts of “Order!” from the benches opposite. He stood for

some moments at the table endeavouring to speak, but the clamour rising, he resumed his seat. Mr. Gorst, remaining standing with his hat on, put to the Chairman as a point of order the question whether the Premier might speak, the House having been cleared for a division. Mr. Playfair said it was only by the indulgence of the House that he might do so. The Premier, again rising, was received with renewed shouts of "Order!" from the Conservative benches. It was suggested to him that he should put his hat on—a proposal which he declined, because he is not in the habit of bringing his hat with him into the House. The clamour continuing, the Solicitor-General, who was sitting near to the right hon. gentleman, took off his hat and placed it on the head of the Premier. This procedure was hailed with loud laughter and prolonged cheering from all parts of the House, which was renewed and continued when it was discovered that the hat was several sizes too small, and that it was only by great dexterity that the Premier was able to balance it over his brows.'

### § 10. *Importance of my slightest Interjection.*

I could not give you a better idea of this, my dear boy, than the little paragraph which I cut directly from the *Daily News*, my faithful jackal. It is valuable also as throwing a side-light on that quaint humour which the same journal notes is so rapidly developing in my nature :

'There was a speech made by the Prime Minister last night, in the course of the Lords' Amendments, which will not appear in the Parliamentary reports. *The right hon. gentleman went out to dinner ten minutes to nine, and returned at twenty-five minutes past ten.* At this moment Mr. Healy was addressing the House on the



question of the resumption of leases, which had been started nearly three hours earlier. As the Premier entered and sat down with weary air between Mr. Forster and the Irish Attorney-General, he exclaimed, in a voice sufficiently loud to be heard over the House, "*Here we are still, are we?*"

'Here we are still, are we?' There is something dramatic in the scene: the weary, worn, calumniated Premier halting out to get a morsel; returning as wearily, and then the exclamation of despair wrung from him—not 'Here we are again!' but 'Here we are still, *are we?*' A quaint, piquant flavour in this, especially in the apparent contradiction between the first and second members: 'Here we are still,' which has the air of positive affirmation, with which, as you well know, I will have nothing to do, so I add the interrogation, '*are we?*' This, I really think, adds a new form of phrase to our language.

But further mark. You will perhaps have noted the curious particularity in the measure of my absence—'Before nine' till 'twenty-five minutes past ten,' as though a reporter were furnished on the *News* with a special stop-watch. But the indiscreet fellow had blundered after all—*Surtout pas trop de zèle!* It conveyed the idea that I had been gorging for an hour and a half—irreconcilable with the previous theory of the weary, worn-out Premier snatching a morsel. I had a reclamation addressed to the paper, with a private rebuke, and it produced a clumsy rectification. I can't tell you how these things provoke me. 'It was at twenty-five minutes to ten, not at half-past, that the Premier returned, *having left for dinner at ten minutes to nine.*' This was too much emphasized and, set out in large type, had a strange air.

§ 11. *On Comic Songs, Fiddles, Voice Emollients, and other Musical Matters.*

An honest well-meaning fellow at Liverpool had written what he termed an 'Anti-War Song,' 'the object of which was to enlist the popular voice and ear in the interests of peace.' Now I own that the success of a personage, the great McDermott—a title self-imposed—in a song with a refrain, 'We don't want to fight,' but introducing profane matter, etc., in its way did harm to my cause; and when this 'J. F. McArdle' offered to dedicate his anti-war song to me, it seemed to bring the thing within the range of really useful and musical politics. So I wrote to him thus cordially:

'SIR,—I am flattered by your request. As to the dedication, pray use your own discretion; but as to the words, I must say that they seem to me to have *real merit*, both in sound and sense, and strike the nail on the head.'

I am sorry to say the thing did not take root, and the 'words'—curious metaphor!—did not strike anything on the head. And if 'voice and ear were enlisted' in the cause of peace, it certainly was not owing to this 'By Jingo!' Such was the rather coarse title.

I can talk, indeed, on any subject—much as Dean Swift could on a Broomstick—and be original too; but music I am strong in. I once discoursed on the fiddle, and called it 'that marvel of music.' A happy phrase; though I fancy it is more correct to say that the music is drawn from the marvel than the marvel from the music. I dwelt not on the wonders displayed by Paganini, and his exquisite tones, or the music of Spöhr; but I preferred to strike out something original, and compared

it with—guess—‘*a steam-engine*.’ ‘as that marvel of locomotion.’ Of course a reflex allusion to what we have often seen—arms and shoulders working like pistons and cranks.

Again, as to electuaries for the voice. A Dr. Shuldhham sent me a volume on this personally interesting topic, which involved also ‘clergyman’s sore throat’ and kindred matters. I was glad to give *my* view on the two points. ‘No part of the work,’ I wrote to him, ‘surprised me more than your account of the various expedients resorted to by eminent singers. There, *if anywhere*, we might have anticipated something like a fixed tradition. But it seems we have learned nothing from experience, and I myself can testify that even in this matter fashion prevails. Within my recollection an orange, or more than one, was alone, as a rule, resorted to by members of Parliament requiring aid. Now it is never used. When *I have had very lengthened statements to make* I have used *what is called* egg-flip—a glass of sherry beaten up with an egg. I think it excellent, but I have *much more faith in the egg* than in the alcohol. I never think of employing it unless on the rare occasions when I have expected to go much beyond an hour. One strong reason for using something of the kind is the great exhaustion often consequent on protracted expectation and attention before speaking.’

In this profession of faith, or rather practice, how many things are set out! Note the wish for truthful accuracy—ever my character! Another would have said, ‘may use *an* orange,’ describing his practice. But I say, ‘*or more than one*’—I also exclude other assistance, *i.e.*, it ‘was alone’—not occasionally, but ‘as a rule’—not used or sucked, but ‘*resorted to*.’ (What a

picture—the orange displayed in its basket, and the speaker ‘resorting to it’!) And by whom? ‘By members of Parliament.’ Yes; but you might think I meant those sitting on the benches, or even those with iron throats—so I add, members ‘*requiring aid*.’

Note also the complimentary insinuation that no one knows what ‘egg-flip’ is—‘what is called.’ I then explain what it is made of. ‘*I think it excellent*’ (a little biographical detail); ‘but I have much more faith in the egg than in the alcohol.’ Which conveys the notion that I dislike spirituous drink, though I am only alluding to its wholesome effects. Without the alcohol I would *not* think it excellent. A good touch is the insinuation that I never speak beyond an hour. ‘The rare occasions’—though the ‘rare’ really refers not to my going beyond the hour, but to my ‘expecting’ to go beyond, or rather to ‘go *much* beyond.’ And the whole is qualified in a highly important, almost destructive way; for I don’t say that I *do* employ, but ‘*think* of employing it.’ Finally, I seem to enfeeble the whole foundation of my practice by confining it to occasions of feeling ‘the great exhaustion often consequent on protracted expectation and attention before speaking’—in other words, till a long speech finishes—then I get *not* egg-flip after all: but ‘something of the kind.’

## § 12. *Art of Making the Most of Small Mercies.*

When I was showing triumphantly how the Irish people preferred me to Parnell, I naturally appealed, in proof, to that most noteworthy rejection of the proposal to offer him the freedom of the city. I said in a speech: ‘The other relief was when the Corporation declined to present the freedom of the city to Mr. Parnell. I look upon that as a fact of very great importance

for two reasons. In the first place, the municipality of Dublin has always been a focus of popular national feeling in Ireland. In the second place, the motion was made expressly upon grounds which were intended to give the go-by to the position of one who was there to uphold law and order, and was in opposition to law and order. It was put rather upon personal grounds, I believe, and to give consolation to certain people; but, notwithstanding that, *I believe upon the casting vote of the Mayor*—(depend upon it, it is a most significant fact, in its bearing on the supposition that most of the Irish people are engaged in opposing the policy of the Government, it is a most significant and important fact)—that motion was rejected!

By a rather provoking turn, they have since presented it to him by an overwhelming majority! Some of his compatriots of course quote my words: ‘Depend upon it, it is a most significant fact; in its bearing upon the supposition that most of the Irish people are engaged in opposing the policy of the Government, it is a most significant and important fact!’

### § 13. *Shabby Treatment by the Gilbeys.*

I recollect once complaining at Newcastle of what I styled ‘the furious accusations’ that were made, especially of one very serious charge, viz., that at the time that I took off the duties on light claret I was a participating partner in the house of Messrs. Gilbey. I confess to you I heartily wish that I, or rather that one of my family, was a partner in that eminent firm. I think it would be a gracious and a kindly thing if they were to make some such offer. There was, indeed, a vintage named after me by them or some other firm; but there has never been the slightest recognition, addressed to



the palate, of the very great service I did for them. That is the naked truth, which, to quote my favourite metaphor, 'has caused me to suffer the pangs of retention' for many years. I think you will own that I conveyed this, and much more, under the following ironical bit of persiflage:

'I have a great respect for Mr. Gilbey. I look upon him as one of those men who know how to reorganise a trade, and that is a very considerable operation; but I do assure you that I had never any community of purpose with Mr. Gilbey, and although I have seen him several times on public affairs, I never *profited by him to the extent of a glass of light wine.*'

But it was far too serious a charge to be dealt with in this light way, though I *could* have been humorous. Here, a happy touch of alliteration occurs to me, like 'Peter Piper picked—': 'I look with a *sort of childish satisfaction to the cheer* that will be given when the *Chairman of Committees* leaves the chair.'

#### § 14. *The 'Clerkenwell' and 'Chapel-Bell' Utterances.*

A charge of having said something inconvenient being made, I wrote: '*My time* may not be of great value, but at any rate it is too valuable for *me to spend it in hunting up testimony and proofs for the exposure of* scribes of the very middling class, who alone indulge in such practices.' Now note the little touch of personal character here revealed. The charge was general, 'without any verifying evidence.' Your ordinary man must have left it unnoticed, as it is impossible to prove a negative. Why, you will say, why '*spend my valuable time in hunting up testimony and proofs*' which do not exist? It was absolutely necessary, my dear boy, owing to my peculiar

mode of self-vindication ; for, as you will guess, I felt I must have written what *appeared* to amount to something of the kind that was insinuated, subject to the usual distinctions and qualifications. Of course if you, dear child, were charged with a general habit of attaching a name other than your own to what is called 'a note of hand,' and your answer was simply a complaint of the loss of 'valuable time spent in hunting up testimony and proofs' for rebutting what it was impossible to prove, I fear people would think there was something in it.

But passing from this, I come to this, the most famous of my utterances, and on which all the Tory gnats and scorpions have harped with a truly disgusting iteration. What did I say?

'In England *circumstances* occurred which drew the attention of the English people to the Irish Church. I said in 1865 that I believed it was out of the range of practical politics. Now it came to this : that when a gaol in the Metropolis was broken into under circumstances which drew the attention of the English people to the state of Ireland, and when in Manchester a policeman was murdered in the exercise of his duty, at once the whole country became alive to the question of the Irish Church. It came within the range of practical politics.' I must frankly own to you that I hold that such popular *manifestations* or 'circumstances' are valuable aids to statesmanship. They add a momentum, as it were. In Italy, Turkey, Ireland, I have ever favoured this *explosive* element.

There was a little weakness in this, and I have been more hard set to extricate myself than on any other occasion. If Cardinal Manning had said that the Gunpowder Plot had brought 'the case of the Catholics within the

range of practical politics' as a 'circumstance' which 'drew the attention of the English people to,' etc., I fancy I should have had him on the hip as approving the measure. If he urged that it was 'like the chapel bell,' merely giving a notice of prayer, how he would have been cut up, raked fore and aft! The *Daily News* said I was noticing, or 'a chronological sequence.' I frankly confess all this *now* seems to me unsubstantial, and I wonder how I got drawn into such a declaration. But the distinction is the finest and most ingenious I have ever taken. As well conceive of a man who had been starving his servants, and whose house they had burned out of revenge, after abolishing the grievance, giving out that '*attention* had been drawn' to the matter by the conflagration. It was surely the alarm that caused the reform. The truth is, it was I myself that raised the question to shipwreck the Tories. Yet the thing continued to be pressed in so annoying a way that I was at last glad to seize an opportunity of taking a very fine distinction. 'It was not Irish agitation—it was not Irish agitation that procured the disestablishment of the Irish Church, but the sense of justice on the part of the people of this country.' 'Clerkenwell!' a rude fellow interrupted, on which; 'Clerkenwell, sir, was no more the cause of the disestablishment of the Irish Church than *when you hear the bell of your chapel ring to call you to public worship*, that peal is the cause of your going to public worship. Clerkenwell was simply that which drew attention.'

Ingenious as this was, and accepted as conclusive, there was really no analogy. They forgot what I had added, '*it came within the range of practical politics.*' You would not say that by the tolling of the 'chapel bell' religion came 'within the range of practical,' etc. When

roast pig was brought within the range of culinary politics, owing to the burning down of a house, one might imagine a Chinese cook declaring that no one knew how pork was to be dressed till the 'circumstances' occurred; till then it was 'outside the range' of cookery. Accused probably of favouring conflagration, he would reply that he did not mean that the house-burning was the cause; it merely '*called public attention* to the subject,' just as the bell of the Joss-house invited to prayer. I fear this excuse would not serve, and he would have been promptly decapitated.

### § 15. *Contented Reserve.*

This happy phrase came to me in respect to Spiritualism, on which my opinion was sought. I both approve and disapprove: *am* interested in it, yet cannot adopt it. I would adopt, and yet would not, of course, offend. Hence, I have devised that intellectual attitude of 'contented reserve.' '(1) I do not share or approve,' I wrote, 'the temper of simple contempt with which so many view the phenomena. (2) It is a question, in the first instance, of evidence. (3) It then follows to explain, as far as we can, such facts as may have been established. (4) My own immediate duties prevent my active intervention; (5) and I remain in what may be called contented reserve, without any fear that imposture will rule or that truth can be mischievous.'

(1) I favour it. (2) The facts may be true. (3) Explain those facts by natural causes, '*as far as we can*'—a hint that they may not be explained. In this happy temper the Spiritualists might fairly claim an opinion from me. But (4) I have no time for '*active intervention*,' but feel in a 'contented reserve' that it may be true or false. Finally, if it be true, it can't be

mischievous. Just as I might say, If Atheism be true, it can't be mischievous. I could do nothing without my 'IF.'

§ 16. *Yes or No, in One Hundred and Eighty Words.*

During my Midlothian campaign, I was asked, 'Would I accept the result of the election as a test of public feeling on Disestablishment?' A simple answer would be 'Yes,' or 'No.' What I wished to say, however, was that the issue had not been raised at all. But follow the happy expanded paraphrase I made of all the topics involved. I excelled myself on this occasion. 'Probably I *may* find an occasion for referring more at large to this subject, to the great satisfaction of my querist, on some of the occasions when I may speak in the country; and therefore I will only say that so far as I am able to judge we are thinking at the present time, and the people of Scotland are thinking, of other subjects, which are regarded, I believe, as of much more urgent and immediate duty than the determination of a very much controverted question, which, as I have said before, I believe the people of Scotland will find themselves perfectly sufficient to determine, and in a manner which the rest of the empire will respect, whether the answer be Aye or No. It is not within my knowledge, certainly, that the consideration of that question has entered definitely into the concerns of the present election, and therefore I do not feel my own information or means of judgment about it at all augmented in the course of it by anything that has reached me.'

Yes: one hundred and eighty words, while an ordinary man, in his meagre way, would not get beyond a dozen. I often think that a 'phrase-book' of handy forms might be made out of my writings. Thus, to



express, 'We have nothing to do with the matter;' you would say, as here, '*It is not within my knowledge, certainly, that the consideration of that question has entered definitely into the concerns of the present,*' etc. Note also the magic words, sprinkled as from a caster over all: of 'indefiniteness;' 'I may find;' 'some of the occasions when I may speak;' 'so far as I am able to judge;' 'regarded, I believe;' 'not within my knowledge, certainly;' 'entering definitely.'

§ 17. *On Mormonism, Floggings, etc.*

All that concerns the relations of the sexes is a peculiarly delicate matter; as to which, to use my own phrase, 'I must be purely general from lack of practical knowledge.' When persons called my attention to the Mormon missionaries, who were decoying young persons over to Utah, I wrote that 'I feared'—not simply it *was*—'it was a matter in which I could not;' no, I mean, 'I feared it was *not* a matter in which I could interfere.' I also 'presumed the young persons go voluntarily,' as, indeed, why should they not?

So, asked about 'flogging children:' 'The facts therein disclosed are indeed horrible and sickening in the last degree; but *as to remedying the form of punishment, Mr. Gladstone desires me to say that his knowledge and experience do not enable him to form a trustworthy judgment.* He will not, however, fail to bring under the notice of the Home Secretary your letter and extracts.'

This, too, suggests my deliverance on 'capital punishment;' the abolition of which is sought by many writers and influential persons. 'The subject of capital punishment is not one which I am disposed, individually, to stir, or even, at the present time, to examine. It seems to me that other public duties are far more urgently in-

cumbent upon the nation and on myself; for example, to labour that capital punishment and other much worse outrages be no longer, through or with our connivance, inflicted from day to day on the innocent sufferers subjected to the yoke of Turkey' (I wonder some venomous Tory has not quoted this as applicable to the Irish outrages on orderly persons). Pray, note how adroitly the matter is turned without an opinion, either for or against, being given on the matter.

§ 18. *Specimens of the 'Art of Giving no Answer.'*

*To Avoid Reading a Pamphlet.*—A being, with the odd title of 'a Christadelphian Lecturer,' once forwarded to me his pamphlet, showing that 'the present crisis in the East is a fulfilment of Scripture prophecies;' and naturally to this tedious class of religious dreamer I was obliged to give some encouragement—that is, a *seeming* encouragement—for, of course, you will see, on analysis, what I write dissolves away.

'SIR,' I wrote—'Allow me to thank you for your tract, which I shall read with great interest, for I have been struck with the apparent ground for the belief that the state of the East may be treated of in that field where you have been labouring.'

Nothing, you see, could be more encouraging. There is a *promise to read*—a very different thing from 'reading,' or 'I have read'—the production, and to read it too 'with great interest,' for it would appear that I actually entertained the same views. But ah! you will see that the promise to read was contingent on a structure, beside which a barley-sugar temple might be called substantial. All I admit is, that the subject 'may be treated' in such a fashion; and this half-hearted view rests merely

on my 'belief.' But that is not all, my dear Herbert. That belief rests upon 'ground'—but then that 'ground' itself is only 'apparent.' And yet with this (1) 'apparent ground' for (2) 'a belief' that something (3) 'may be' so, I am 'struck'! Note also my curious phrase, 'in *that* field in which you have been labouring'—a field in which the 'state of the East' may be treated!

*How to Decline an Invitation.*—On another occasion I received an invitation to attend a Bath association which I nicely distinguished as being 'so kindly penned and conveyed to me,' thus metaphysically dividing the abstract idea of a letter into two operations. I asked the secretary to come to me, when I would give my reasons for declining; and to express this would seem simple to vulgar minds. 'If you can call on me to-morrow I shall explain why I cannot accept your invitation.' So would have written poor exploded Palmerston or Derby. But, my dear boy, I *am* a great hair-splitter, and as such must take at least a dozen fine distinctions before I can explain my meaning, and yet, mark! at the end I leave all problematical!

'I (1) should,' I write, 'be glad (2) to explain to you (3) orally (4) the reasons which will (5) I fear (6) prevent (7) my availing myself of (8) the kindness (9) tendered to me, (10) if it be convenient to you (11) to come out (12) here (13) to-morrow (14) forenoon (15) for the purpose.' In other words, *if* you can pay me a visit, *if* it be convenient to you *for* the purpose, I *should* be glad—'shall be' would be too positive—'to explain' *orally* (I could not explain in writing to a visitor, but still the expression helps to cloud) the reasons which—prevent? No, here are some further shades of *finesse*

which must be attended to. The reasons, as I had asked the man out to explain them, might be supposed actually to exist, and so *do* 'prevent.' But no, they '*will*' prevent: in the future. Then, to put doubt upon doubt, I interpolate an 'I fear.'

*On Religions.*—In the Schools, I would have been a match for any of their Sanches and Escobars. I would have been dubbed '*Doctor Subtilissimus*.' When one writes to know, 'Whether, in my opinion, the Church of Rome would gain by the disestablishment of the Church of England,' I sat down to fill this post-card:

'SIR,—I am not able to reply to your note as the importance of its subject and (I am sure) its sincerity would demand, *but I may say that I have seen no reason to believe the Church of Rome to be upon the whole gaining ground in this country*, and that I do not believe that the congregations of the Church of England, either as a State Church or otherwise, are disposed to join it.'

Here will be noted my laboured air of mock respect; as though it were addressed to some troubled soul anxious to have his doubts removed by a religious medicine-man, instead of to a nobody who wished to receive a post-card from an ex-Premier. I convey the idea that I would be delighted to enter at full length on the subject, from its 'importance,' as well as from the way in which the question has impressed me—his 'sincerity,' in short. Yet having paid him this meagre compliment, it struck me as being too positive in its terms and might commit me; so I hasten to attenuate it by an 'I am sure.' The statement that follows is—I must boast a little—truly Gladstonian in its haziness: you will find it about as difficult to grasp its meaning as to take up calves'-foot jelly in the fingers. You see I

appear, or wish to appear, to say, that I think the Church of Rome has not gained. Now my first alternative is substituting 'gain ground' for 'gain,' being a more misty phrase. Then I can qualify that, or cut it down, by 'upon the whole'—so that I admit a certain extent of progress. Having thus prepared a statement of a proper ductility I can go to work, and proceed at last to furnish the opinion on it that was asked of me; and this amounts, *not to knowledge*, but to belief or non-belief; and this belief again I qualify with '*I see no reason.*'

On one occasion I wrote to some working men that I '(1) observed with (2) special satisfaction . . . that (3) in particular (4) they feel (5) in common, (6) as I believe, (7) with a (8) great majority,' etc. Now admire such a complex operation as this, how one could 'observe *especially* . . . and *in particular*, something that is felt *in common* with others; that is to say, with *most* of the others; though all this may not be true, yet still *I* believe it.'

A grateful 'Irish Catholic' once wrote to me that the warm feelings of his countrymen were still unchanged; when I, of course, responded, begging of him to accept my 'hasty *but* sincere thanks.' Note the here-implied connection between insincerity and hurry. I tell him that for the future I will not be able to do anything for the Catholics, and will have no relations with them. An intelligent idea enough, but darkly involved: '(1) The feelings (2) you describe are (3) not the less valued (4) by me because (5) all probability has ceased (6) of their finding (7) in the future (8) any scope (9) for action.' 'Feelings finding,' 'probability ceasing.' I take credit for valuing gratitude for the past, you see, *because* my own behaviour for the future is not to excite it.



*Dealing with a Vestry.* — Anxious about their Plumstead Common, the vestry asked my aid. I had already promised to support my Tory colleague's bill on the subject, and at once enter into a delightful and metaphysical process of balancing conflicting opinion and interests :

'I postpone my reply to your letter of the 12th until after I should have seen the propositions made in the measure of Mr. Boord, who is, I understand, acting on behalf of the Plumstead Vestry in dealing with the case of the Common. That vestry being a representative body, and having desired my aid as one of their representatives, I have not, upon such knowledge of the case as I have been able to acquire, felt warranted in declining their request. My assent has been, however, upon the facts as they came before me, and it in no way precludes my giving attention and due weight to whatever further intimation I may receive on the sentiments of the community and the merits of the case.'

Here are my usual favourite phrases—not 'knowledge,' but 'such knowledge of the case as I have been able to acquire;' not 'refuse,' but 'felt warranted in declining,' etc. The result was that I was willing to commit myself to my correspondents to the same extent that I had committed myself to the vestry, viz., in a Gladstonian or Pickwickian sense. Please to compare my descriptions of past and future knowledge : in the first I have only 'such knowledge of the case as I have been able to acquire;' the second taking the shape of 'whatever *further intimation I may receive on the sentiments of the community,*' etc.: where you have the idea of getting an 'intimation *on* sentiments.' The 'intimation' was forwarded. On which I had to indulge in new

refinements, I 'could do no more,' I say, 'than engage myself to the impartial examination of this,' etc. Still I would present their petition, 'not without some fear that the reference in it to any bill not yet introduced may be informal, but with the hope that this may not prove a difficulty as to its reception.' Note the 'with' and 'without.' The persons got up a meeting, and begged of me to attend. I declined. A man of the average M.P. type might have said something about wishing to be an inhabitant for the nonce, but I urged gravely that this point excluded me. Another might have said, 'I wish I could help you, but cannot.' Not so I: 'And I am (1) not of opinion (2) at present (3) that my presence would (4) add weight (5) to the proceedings.' Here is my device for producing a happy indistinctness, viz., of putting it negatively rather than affirmatively. I say that I do not share in the opinion that my presence would add weight to the meeting, which would seem to convey that there was a flattering belief abroad to that effect, and that I dissent from it modestly; the ordinary way is, 'I am of opinion that my presence would not add weight,' etc.; and I qualify all by an 'at present.'

*Madame N.*—A story of a fair Russian, supposed to have been despatched for the purpose of captivating the Liberal leader, had been going round the papers. 'Between this lady and Mr. Gladstone,' said one of these impudent chroniclers, 'there has been a correspondence, and she is said to hold many letters which do greater honour to the heart than to the head of our emotional statesman, and the production of which may prove highly inconvenient to him hereafter.' 'A Sheffield gentleman' kindly forwarded the extract to me, when I proceeded gravely to deal with this subject, and justify myself to my hitherto unknown correspondent.

‘SIR,’ I wrote to him,—‘The extract you have kindly sent me appears to embody one of those vulgar intrusions into private life which are commonly attended with an unscrupulous rashness in assertion. That any correspondent of mine on the Eastern Question *is in possession* of such letters as it describes is *entirely* false. I cannot appear in print on such a matter, but the assertion I have just made may be freely repeated on my authority.’

Now they insinuated that letters, *not* upon the Eastern Question, but upon a more graceful subject, had passed. Instead, I say that they are ‘*not in possession*’ of any letters of the kind. I prefer this to saying plainly, ‘*I have written no such letters.*’ ‘The correspondent of mine *on the Eastern Question*’ is supplied to cloud the matter, for no one had alluded to any correspondent on *that subject*. Again, note my private opinion of the transaction, which is that the statement was ‘a vulgar intrusion,’ and as untrue as it was vulgar. Why not say so? No; better refine and qualify: ‘it appeared’ to me to be so; and as to ‘be so’ was rather too positive, let me put ‘embody.’ And embody what? Not exactly *a* vulgar intrusion, but ‘one of’ such: which are accompanied by what—falsehood? No: let us say ‘unscrupulous *rashness* in assertion.’ But the whole can be qualified by one final attenuation, viz., ‘commonly;’ so that by this saving clause I actually do not say, though I appear to do so, that the vulgar intrusion is on this occasion accompanied by falsehood. Again, note my declaration that ‘I could not appear in print’ on such a matter as the authorisation of the publication of my disclaimer in every journal in the kingdom! The document is signed ‘your very faithful W. E. Gladstone,’ which I own seemed as though the fair Russian was before my eyes.

Again. Certain bondholders wishing to have their claims supported in the House—I was out of office, and could not well ‘keep my mind in suspense,’ or ‘in a contented reserve’—here was my reply : ‘ Though I do not think it would be advisable that I myself should raise the question, yet when the appeal is made to Parliament I shall think it my duty, unless circumstances come to my knowledge in the interval of a nature to alter my views of the subject, to support it,’ etc. The old story. It amounted to this : I will not raise the question.

### § 19. *Ingenious Plea for Slave-owning.*

Is it not a curious note of my ‘many-sidedness’ that I should have always looked tenderly on slave-owning? I took the part of the American slave states in the war. More odd still, I find that in my early Parliamentary days I was a slave-owner myself—or my father was—and during three years fought their battle warmly, maintaining that negroes were legitimate property! My words were, it seems : ‘I deprecated slavery; but, conceding all this, were not Englishmen entitled to retain a right to their own honestly and legally acquired property?’ I even insisted that slaves came into the category of the more sacred forms of property, and that it was impossible for Parliament itself to touch that property without awarding compensation to its owners. The result of my efforts was that my family was lucky enough to receive some £68,000 for our 1,300 slaves. Of course the ribald papers got hold of the incident. But a most awkward and unexpected turn followed. Here was the doctrine of *compensation* laid down; for had I not added that ‘English honour’ and ‘English justice’ required that the ‘fullest compensation’ should

be made to those who had 'legally and honestly' become possessed of a 'form of property, sanctioned by the law' at the time when it was acquired? You see what I mean—the Irish landlords. The awkwardness is great. I appear to be for compensation to a slave-lord—that slave-lord, moreover, being myself—but not to a landlord. It will give me much anxious thought by-and-by to devise a formula of extrication.

Well, when straining every nerve to pass the Land Bill, and pressed hard with my admission that there were but a few bad landlords, etc., I thought of something that occurred during this emancipation of the negroes—viz., the enforced abolition of the apprenticeship, in 1833; which, I said, bore a 'marked analogy' to the case before the House. 'The system,' I said, 'worked admirably well. . . . But, unhappily, in one or two islands, especially in Jamaica, there was a knot of men who could not forget or sever themselves from the vicious habits of their early life, and continued to carry the traditions and practices of slavery into the new legal condition. This was discovered . . . and in consequence of the acts of a few, notwithstanding the good conduct of the many, *there was a sharp and sudden interference with the letter of the contract, ending in the unrequited remission of two years of apprenticeship in the West Indies.* Well, sir, I think that in the same way some few landlords of Ireland,' etc.

This told well. And the analogy was well marked. In both cases, public opinion was roused. Parliament 'sharply and suddenly' intervened. The good Jamaica landlords, like the good Irish, were made to suffer for the bad.

Now it is worth your study to see how skilfully this is built up, and how artfully a master can mould seem-



ing facts to his purpose. What really occurred was this. A resolution brought forward to that effect, was opposed, not only by *myself*, but by the Government ; indeed, I finished the debate in a long and very able speech, in which I agreed with Dr. Lushington that they were to be bound by the rule and not the exception in the conduct of the planters, and clearly proved that the apprenticeship was part of the compensation awarded to the planters.

Later, indeed, by what is called a 'snap' vote, and a majority of three, it was passed. But later again, the proposer of it withdrew it, as the Government declared that it was *not* the object of the Government *forcibly* to interfere ; and there was a hope that the Jamaica owners might of their own grace and motion act in the matter. In the end they actually did so. The 'marked analogy,' you see, lay (a) in the contrast between my *own* action then, and now ; (b) in maintaining compensation to proprietors then, and not now ; (c) in that being done *by* the landlords *voluntarily*, which is now 'a sharp and sudden interference with the letter of the contract,' by the State ! Yet see how out of such hostile materials I construct a precedent.

### § 20. *Truth and Falsehood Defined.*

I recollect once defining these two important social factors. I said, I think, that falsehood was 'polemics,' or justifiably incident thereto. But a deep philosophy underlies that remark ; and I am free to admit that in my own private practice I think what Dr. Newman calls 'the economy' should be followed. A scene-painter uses coarse unrecognisable strokes, which yet in the light represent his meaning. I could quote a curious instance—from myself—in reference to the word

‘repudiate.’ When speaking in Midlothian, I said, ‘I repudiated,’ or the nation should, the Transvaal Annexation. This was recollected, when in the Queen’s speech instead of ‘repudiating’ the transaction, we adopted it, and announced that we would put down the Boers. I had, I confess, forgotten the unlucky word, which some one, as usual, dug out and pressed me with. I met him ingeniously enough. By ‘*repudiating*’ the annexation, I only meant, that I ‘*disapproved*’ of it. It certainly does mean that, and a little more. When you repudiate your wife, you disapprove of her, but you also get rid of her. All, however, applauded. It was *my* meaning.

### § 21. *What is my Religion?*

But I fancy it is in the RELIGIOUS department that I am most many-sided. Of my first book, that on Church and State, it was Wordsworth that said ‘he could not distinguish its principles from Romanism.’ I have assailed the late Pope. I have attended Dr. Parker, at his ‘City Temple.’ I have gone to ‘Moody and Sankey.’ I have destroyed the Irish Church, and am assured that that old branch of Protestantism will, in a couple of generations, now being starved out, have ceased to exist. I have held out hopes of my joining in the destruction of the English and Scotch Establishment. I have coquetted with the Greek Church. I have pleaded for the opinions of the late Prince Consort, as ‘one of those exceptional beings who dissent from, or give only a faint or gradual adhesion to the ancient creed of Christendom’; a very happy and handsome description of what the vulgar, in their illiberal way, style an infidel or an atheist. My Irish Solicitor-General is an Unitarian; my friend Dilke is a *libre penseur* of the first water; and I have subscribed to a

monument to Leopardi—I think that is the person—one of the most conspicuous of the old Italian infidels. This, for what is called ‘all-roundness,’ is pretty well. At this moment am I not in the attitude of patron of the worthy but inconvenient Bradlaugh? When he was sitting at the entrance of the House of Commons, his coat torn, he himself buffeted, etc., who was it, as the newspaper described it, that bent over him and administered words of comfort? You, my son. I have even cited with approbation, in a speech, some verses of this gentleman. Looking back to three letters I addressed to him last Session, you will find I signed myself successively thus: (1) ‘I remain, dear sir, your very faithful servant;’ (2) ‘I have the honour to be, dear sir, your faithful servant;’ and, (3), ‘I remain, dear sir, your *very faithful and obedient servant.*’ Note the crescendo of affectionate signature; for I do, and mean to ‘remain,’ his *very* faithful and obedient servant. And this, I have no doubt, I shall find myself doing ‘frequently’—or rather, ‘not uncommonly’—during this Session. Note, by the way, an imputed distinction in these words, which I can illustrate by an example. In the Impalement question, I had first said, that bodies thus penetrated were ‘frequently’ found; a description for which I later substituted, ‘not uncommonly found.’ But to resume.

I made a special journey, or rather especially made a journey, to Munich, to confer with Döllinger, then one of my great men. In short, I am High, Low, Greek, Roman, and Evangelical ‘by turns, and little long;’ pro-atheist and pro-infidel occasionally. I dare say I shall think by-and-by of General Booth. ‘I am led to suppose there is much apparent ground for a belief in the opinion that religious doctrine may be reinforced and stimulated by an admixture of the military element.’

How odd that in every incident there should arise this doubt as to what I said ! I find that I am thought to have said something, and am then obliged to say that I said something else. The 'fifteen thousand sentences of death'—*i.e.*, evictions ; the telegram to the Lord Mayor on the Property Defence Association (one of the most ingeniously beautiful distinctions ever taken) ; my *innocently* assuming that Captain Boycott wanted military, not pecuniary aid, when he enumerated his losses, and begged for 'assistance' from the Government : in these and a hundred other instances, I have to be perpetually explaining and contradicting.

My name has been given to a rather attenuated vintage (at 12s. a dozen), '*the Gladstone Claret*;' it has also been conferred on a patent 'collapsing and expanding Gladstone Bag'—which, oddly enough, seems to have affinity with my character. I have even seen in a portmanteau-maker's establishment the charming description of an article, 'COWHIDE GLADSTONE !' Once, pleased at finding something I sought in a convenient sort of almanack, I broke out into loud public eulogium of the same—why, I now cannot see, but so it was—and certainly gave valuable stimulant to the sale of 'WHITAKER'S ALMANACK.'

You will recollect, too, the farmers' dinner, at which I quoted a brilliant epigram, to great applause ! (you will guess whose the epigram was ?)

'The farmers of Aylesbury gathered to dine,  
And they ate their prime beef and they drank their old wine.  
With the wine there was beer, with the beer there was "bacca ;"  
The liquors went round,  
And the banquet was crowned  
With some thundering news from the Straits of Malacca.'

Why I break out in this way, I cannot tell. It comes, I believe, of a superfœtation of spirit ; otherwise

the sense of 'retention' would be too overpowering. I believe neither Pitt, nor Fox, nor Aberdeen, nor Grey, nor Beaconsfield even, ever indulged in them.

What vast interesting questions there are to be determined! *Are Railway Stations adapted for oratory?* I once seriously dealt with the point at King's Cross Station. 'However admirable are the arrangements made for our accommodation by the railway authorities, a railway station is not, and never can be, the most convenient place to express one's feelings by means of the human voice. To do so adequately would require a much greater power than the human voice is capable of.' Here I lay the fault on the station itself, which, by the very terms of its function, 'is not and never can be' suitable for 'our accommodation' in relation to hortatory purposes. True, I have often '*expressed my feelings by means of the human voice*' from the window of a carriage, and I think 'adequately.'

But enough. Dixi. These things I have set down ostensibly for you, dear Herbert; in reality, for the greater and more important audience whom I habitually address. Not so much for their, or indeed for anybody's benefit, as for my own. And I will conclude with the habitual invitation of the Roman playwrights—always welcome to me—'Vos plaudite.'



*On the 20th of June will be ready, price One Shilling.*

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*HAIR SPLITTING AS A FINE ART*

PART II

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MORE LETTERS TO MY SON  
HERBERT

(SEQUEL TO 'LETTERS TO MY SON HERBERT')

'But further, we must observe that whether from an original fault of character, or from a bad education, he had but little strictness in his view of the great cardinal virtue of truth.'—RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE.

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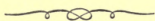
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## MORE LETTERS TO MY SON HERBERT,

ON HIS PROGRESS UNDER MY TEACHINGS.



MY DEAR HERBERT,

Lately I addressed to you certain experiences of my forty-five memorable years of a busy life, on the art or craft of passiveness when appearing to act, of virtual silence when appearing to speak, of answering nothing when appearing to reply, and, in short, of splitting hairs into as many portions as may be required. I did hope that this would bear fruit in your case; and I am bound to say that the public have shown no little eagerness to profit by my lessons. What has particularly pleased me is, that you have shown that you have almost anticipated what I have been wishing to teach you; and I am delighted to find that, though without, of course, the same skill, you have the good-will and wish to divide a hair after my own heart and my own principles. I have had my eye on you, my dear child. You are *puer bonæ indolis*, and, like me, you hold that truth—all the truth, and nothing but the truth—is often, too, nothing but sheer falsehood. So have I seen in the yard at Hawarden the little puppy hound playing with the huntsman, and showing a precocious eagerness for the fox.

Do not, however, be led away by this praise. For in the same breath, I must tell you that I have noticed, during your late expeditions, a sad clumsiness of touch, which really at times suggested that hopeless personage your brother, W. H. G. I grieve to say between you and me, my dear boy, that there were some dreadfully shocking things done ; mistakes worse than crimes ; gross though well-meant attempts. The stories of your going to look on at an eviction ; those talks with peasants, who, as I find, were rudely outspoken, forgetting what was owing to *me* ; and, above all, that crass business of telegraphing to me whether you should give admission to an importunate or impudent (much the same thing) deputation, shutting yourself up and waiting for the reply—all this was incredibly foolish. As you know, we had to ‘withdraw you from circulation.’ But notice, I do not scold. For all was more than redeemed by that welcome glimmering of what the world calls the unveracious sense, but which to me is the truth. Through your short course I have noted that, when anything like failure is impending, you catch at this as at a plank. Puny and miniature as your little efforts are in this direction, they please me. You will do better as you grow stronger.

§ 1. *True Meaning of Taking the Bull by the Horns.*

In a letter containing one of my best-ventilated phrases—‘sheer blood-guiltiness’—and addressed to a parliamentary candidate, I said that he had adopted the true course in reference to the Transvaal business by ‘taking the bull by the horns.’ Since then I have followed these tactics—taking the animal by the horns in my own way. The accepted meaning of the phrase is supposed to be facing the argument or the difficulty,

without any confusion or avoidance. Curious to say, I regard it as but another phrase for a bold denial. Perhaps we might read '*appearing* to take the bull by the horns,' but it comes to the same thing. You have had many illustrations of this practice ; but I can furnish a singularly good and instructive one.

I will take your little argument with Lord Claud Hamilton, as understood by you and him, and go through it with you, showing the stupid mistakes (pardon me) committed by you. I will then show you how I myself, in such a case, would have dealt with such a controversy. He had certainly the best of it ; with me he would have had the worst of it. However, I give you all credit for the *attempt* you made, clumsy as it was.

Now you will judge of this compliment to myself, after I have explained the instance, and then your own more unequal but still praiseworthy effort

This most aggressive of the young Conservatives, Lord Claud, whom I have often had occasion to put down before now, dared to make a reckless (because addressed to *me*) reproach, that I had described certain warnings of my Lord Grey, as to the severance of the Irish portion from the Empire, as 'the apprehensions of an old woman.' This insolence, not in the matter as in the spirit, I resented. 'Where?' I asked haughtily. 'In Midlothian,' he answered. '*Never!*' I replied to cheers. The bull was here, as you see, taken by the horns. The thing was untrue. The man who made such a charge was a calumniator. He came down the next day, fortified with the report from the *Times*, which he had hunted up, for it had been left out of my Midlothian speeches. It ran : He (that is, I) did not agree with Lord Grey as to his apprehensions of Ireland being severed from the British Empire. . . .

He put it away as an old woman's apprehensions : not that he wanted to apply the term 'old woman' to anybody. He employed it strictly to qualify the character of the apprehension.' And I concluded : 'I have now done with Lord Grey.'

Now on hearing this read, the means of ex-trication seemed narrow enough. The words were cogent, and, I confess, to ordinary persons, the sense would appear as Lord Claud read it. I did not style Lord Grey as an old woman ; I said such feelings as he had expressed *were* those of an old woman. It was really beautiful the method I found on the instant. I began by frankly and generously admitting that, in a certain point where I had named him, I referred to Lord Grey and his 'apprehensions' about Ireland. But beyond that I referred to the public in general. But listen to me :

'Then I went on to deal with the apprehension which *I did not say Lord Grey had expressed*. I am not at all sure that he did express it. I hardly believe that he expressed it. *It might refer to any person*.' There the bull is seized three or four times by the horns, and with wonderful success. For if you look closely, you will see *the whole* can only refer to Lord Grey, and to no one else. *His* was the apprehension ; and you will note that to make it clearer, I wind up with, 'I have now done with Lord Grey.'

Now, in your little episode there is a wonderful parallelism. Strange to say, your encounter was also with this Lord Claud Hamilton. This man, it seems, accused you—*my* son—of having travelled under a false name, a charge, however, I must say, drawn on yourself by your vain boast that you had travelled, and that any stranger could travel, through Ireland, without



insult or molestation. He said you were jeered at on attending an eviction, that you were obliged for protection to have a detective at your door in Dublin Castle. With an insolent Toryism he added some stories such as that, dining at the Railway Hotel, Killarney, a gentleman who sat next you, in answer to a question of 'Mr. Herbert's,' said that he thought Mr. Gladstone, senior, ought to be confined in one of her Majesty's lunatic asylums pending her Majesty's pleasure.' But here is your letter, not a brilliant one, but, as I said, redeemed by the bold tone of denial—the only mode, alas! of meeting awkward staring facts. That is my own way. 'I am sorry that the noble Lord should think it worth his while to impute to me *words that I never spoke, and to tell stories that have no truth in them.*' Good. '1. I did not tell the authorities in Ireland, or anyone else, that, in regard to the state of the country, they were certainly wrong in their opinions. 2. I did not say that they overrated the whole of the circumstances existing in that country. 3. I did not say that it was perfectly peaceable. 4. I did not say that everybody might travel there without the slightest danger to life or property. 5. *I did not stay at Killarney under an assumed name. The little anecdote is a fiction.* . . . Further comment is needless.'

Now this is good *in omnibus* so far as it goes; but you may go too far in denial—as the issue proved. The involved less definite way would have been better. The 'further comment,' however 'needless' on your part, was, unfortunately, forthcoming from the other side. You had begun well. Lord Claud had made it 'matter of charge' that you had concealed your name at a Killarney hotel. You denied it, and with a true boldness. That was the right way. I see it turned

out that you actually did so at a *Cork hotel*; but no matter—you took the right course. ‘I shall be surprised,’ says Lord Claud Hamilton in his insolent way, ‘if he ventures to deny this.’ Still, *De l’audace, toujours de l’audace*. Deny, deny, deny; and qualify if *pressed*. One sentence of yours is so artistic in this connection that I could not be surprised if some have thought I had slightly touched it. ‘The fact that for two or three days *I withheld my surname from the managers of the Imperial Hotel in Cork* does not concern Lord Claud Hamilton or anyone else.’ That is the right tone, though, of course, it *does* concern many persons—at least, to the point of being sarcastic—why the Prime Minister’s son should be going disguised through the country. The phrase I delight in is, ‘*I withheld my surname*,’ it is such a happy form for ‘assuming a false name;’ for I must tell you plainly, and between ourselves, that to go about as ‘Mr. Herbert’ is not ‘withholding your surname,’ but assuming another surname not your own. It might convey that you belonged to the Welsh Herberts, or to the noble family of Pembroke, which you do not. Had your name been John, and you set yourself down as ‘Mr. John,’ you might justly have said ‘you withheld your surname.’ You must see that. If you had what is vulgarly called *forged* the name Herbert to a promissory note, your plea that you merely ‘*withheld* your surname’ would not suffice to a jury. But it was a capital thought, and well attempted. Almost as good (and paternal) was your next: ‘Whatever name I might have chosen to bear, I should still have been a stranger.’ It sounded well as a back stroke; but forgive me if I tell you there is a fine piece of casuistry involved in it. It did matter what name you bore; and

if you bore that of the Prime Minister's son, you became known, and not a stranger ; hence the necessity (his vile insinuation) of withholding it. It was good, therefore, as an answer to your boast that all strangers could go about in safety. It was then stated that you had been hooted at by a mob of children : ' I stated in my speech that personally I did not receive "the smallest incivility from man or woman." The evicting party which I accompanied as a spectator was certainly jeered and hooted at : on all these occasions the names of Government officials are treated without much courtesy. But I repeat, I neither heard nor received personally any incivility. *As for the children, they are excluded by the words I used in my speech.*' I could embrace you for that touch about the children, and I almost shed tears when I came to the passage, so much was it in my own manner. It was in the finest style of the higher casuistry—the *haute école*, as it were. ' I was walking at the time with the resident magistrate who was in command of the expedition, and we came in for the usual kind of demonstration made *against everyone* known to be in any way connected with the evicting force. Finally, I have to charge Lord C. Hamilton with a seventh misstatement. Whatever may have been the business of the detective at Dublin Castle to whom he alludes, he had nothing whatever to do with me.' Here you *deny* as heartily as I could wish, and are as happily nebulous as myself. But let me ask you, how could you *not* receive 'personally the smallest incivility' when you admit, later on, that '*everyone*' connected with the evicting force invariably comes in for insults ? Again, you deny the detective with a gallant audacity ; but still it seems he was placed at your door ; and you here 'came in for the

protection necessary for everyone connected with the governing party.' In future I think you had better let me look over these little immature attempts before committing them to the public. I will show you how to tangle, squeeze out the cuttle-fish's ink, and cloud the waters. 'Tis not everyone can bend *my* bow.

Now, my child, I do not want to flatter you, but is there not a remarkable similarity in our two little efforts? I may, I think, picture you in the future delivering my utterances and common forms, 'seeing no reason to believe that there is any common measure of trustworthy belief to be attached to the supposition,' and the like; when pressed, and likely to be driven from covert into the open country of candour, doubting 'whether you are, upon the whole, prepared to come within a measurable certainty of assent to the particular statement in question;' but you must practise, study, and copy your fitting model—myself.

## § 2. *The Fatal Night-shirt.*

And then, my dear boy, there was a singularly awkward, not to say grotesque, incident connected with the discovery of the withheld name. There is a matter your dear mother always sees to—a matter of *marking-ink*—praiseworthy and suitable in your case. So young too, and likely to overlook it as trifling! But it is no trifle. It is stated that the detection—not at Killarney, but at Cork—was owing to a chambermaid having observed your real name set out *on your night-shirt*! Now there is a sort of ridicule attaching to this. A night-shirt! If you conceal, why not conceal effectively? A little strategy would have beguiled the woman. Your mother would not have minded the obliteration in the case of *one*

garment. Some one spoke of you as 'the Infant Hercules,' I being the older parental one; and by a curious coincidence, here a Dejanira, in the shape of a Cork chambermaid (I mean, of course, one *at* Cork), acting as the classic lady, betrays you by a shirt!

### § 3. *Fencing with Home Rulers.*

There was another instance in which you showed that you came of the true old ambiguous stock—'a chip of the old block,' as it was called. I own that the manner in which you fenced with certain intrusive busybodies was, in its intentions, though not in its success, worthy of your 'governor.' It seems that when you stood for Leeds, it was found necessary to deal with the Irish, and their 'Home Rule,' now becoming unhappily a factor to be considered in these contests; it would not do to adopt, nor yet to repudiate the principle. You put the thing aside fairly well; you were not prepared at that moment to *pledge yourself* to vote for Home Rule. You conveyed that you desired time, and would like to give yourself to the study of this fascinating subject. This was the implied gloss. Accordingly, when this version appeared in the *Times*, we all felt that it had the fitting paternal ambiguity. You seemed to say that when you had time to look about you, you would adopt the principle; and yet when the time came you might fairly urge that consideration had not convinced you. But the shrewd Home Rulers, however, were not content, and began to clamour, and by the mouth of the secretary sent forth what they styled 'the official report of the deputation,' making you say: 'He did not know much of political life yet, and would not say that in the course of a year or two he would not vote for the inquiry.'



Now I confess, though not present, that this was the impression left on a deputation by your artfully-chosen language. But of course the very thing was to deny, and very boldly you accordingly wrote: 'I emphatically declared that I was *not prepared to vote* for an inquiry into the Irish demand for Home Rule. I did not say that being a young politician I might do so in a year or two.' Now this was quite in my own key, one of my phrases: 'You were not *prepared to vote*,' which is, in truth, a judicious limitation of your meaning, and certainly imparts the required elasticity. You then went on to make one of my favourite points. They appeal to their 'official report' against you, and you properly say, '*There was no reporter present*,' though between you and me, an 'official report of proceedings' does not necessarily presuppose a shorthand-writer present. 'I will content myself with saying that the official report is incorrect.' To this I find the secretary retorting that you speak of 'incorrectness,' and don't say *in what particular* (in which you are perfectly right). He reiterated his charge that you said, 'I will not vote for Home Rule now.' They then pressed to know would you do so in a year or two, to which you replied that 'you were new to Parliament, and that you did not know; *but that you would not say that you would not in a year or two*. You were not prepared to say that you would vote against the motion now.' Capital! this is all I could wish, and I fancy I could almost have written the words 'You would not say that you would not.'

#### § 4. *Curious Parallel between Father and Son.*

One more valuable instance, before concluding, of this art of denial. One Reverend Crosthwaite sent to

me what is called a cutting from the *Saturday Review*, which, on reviewing the 'Life of Wilberforce,' made allusion to some (presumed) statement of mine therein contained, to the effect that my dealings with and treatment of the endowments of the Irish Church would be affected by the question of its descent from St. Patrick. Now, such an utterance would be highly inconvenient and improper to publish, as it gave an ecclesiastical tinge to a purely political matter. I have now nothing to do with apostolical descents, having a broad 'community of purpose' with Spurgeons, Parkers, Hyacinthes, Leopardis, Th—l—w—tes, Döllingers, and even Bradlaughs, none of whom affect to have the Succession, so I replied :

'There is *not a word* to sustain the assertion made about endowment. If it be sheer falsehood, I am sorry to say it is only one of the many published in the same journal from time to time.'

Between you and me, I think the phrase 'if there be sheer falsehood,' simply masterly. It is as though I were to say to a man, 'If this be a falsehood, it is, I am sorry to say, only one of the many uttered by you about me.' 'How, sir; do you charge me with falsehood?' 'No; it is all contingent on the present instance being a falsehood, which I don't say it is.' I use the great peacemaker 'if.' Note the ellipse in the portion of the sentence commencing 'if.' Had I entered into controversy with the *Saturday Review*, I should have contended that my meaning was, 'If this sheer falsehood be *your* utterance' (here note the ambiguity, *i.e.*, if it be true it be in your paper, or if it be true, as a matter of fact, uttered by you), 'I am sorry to say it is only one of the many published,' etc.

I was not sorry thus to brand that journal, and the

opportunity was a good one ; for I must own to you the statement *did not appear* in the *Saturday Review*, but in the *Pall Mall Gazette*—a fact which indeed was conspicuous in the type, that of the latter being large, and what is termed ‘old-faced.’ Literary men recognise these things by instinct. The mistake, however, rested with the reverend sender. I took it on his authority.

Now, my dear boy, following your own capital little attempt at wholly denying that ‘you withheld your name’ because the correct *venue* was not laid, I, too, simply deny this ‘matter of charge’ because laid in a wrong organ. You see ? If you turn to the ‘Life of Wilberforce,’ you will actually find a passage to this effect. I agreed with the Bishop that ‘the political question of the continuance of the present settlement of Church property in Ireland cannot be decided with reference to his queries—that I could not have faith in the ordination unless *I can see the seal and signature, and these how can I separate from ecclesiastical descent?*’ Between you and me, they might say on this, *Habeo confitentem*. But as you were falsely charged with withholding your name at Killarney when it was at Cork you did so, so this calumny was said to be urged against me in the *weekly* organ when it should have been charged as in the *daily evening* one ! But I am even prepared to take issue on the very words of the passage, and am ready to prove that it has a totally different meaning, or indeed any meaning that I may select.

My example too, my dear child, has reacted not only on you, but on others. Dilke is a very promising pupil in this ‘*Science of Reserve*,’ as I may call it, and I was really gratified to find even the Caledonian nature of the maladroit Playfair adapting itself, or striving to adapt itself, to this temper. He was

pressed as to whether he had communicated a letter to the *Observer* or some other paper which was named, and he denied it with all the appearance of sincerity. The point, you see, was, had he gone in excess of his duty as Chairman of Committees in communicating with newspapers? On being pressed, however, and after an ineffectual attempt of the Speaker's to shield him, Playfair explained that 'the hon. gentleman had asked him at five o'clock on Monday whether he had communicated the paragraphs that appeared in these newspapers, and he had answered that he had not done so, either directly to *those papers* or to *their reporters*. At eleven o'clock the same night he received a note from the representative of the *Scotsman* in answer to a note he had sent him marked 'Private and confidential.' This gentleman informed him that he had shown his (Mr. Playfair's) note to several gentlemen of the Press.'

You see, quite in the same key as your withholding your name at the hotel at Cork. All this promises well. I shall leave a school behind me. Poor Playfair showed himself not merely a follower and imitator, but a vindicator of his master. I noticed the following little scene :

'Mr. Lalor said the hon. member for Limerick was trying to do what no one ever did do, or what no man ever could, *and that was to confine the Prime Minister to any statement he had made.*

'Playfair : The hon. member is casting an imputation upon a member of this House, and the hon. member must withdrew the expression.'

So with the Lord Privy Seal, and Selborne, who are promising scholars. The former, taxed with having said that my Land Bill 'would cause no money loss

whatever' to the landlords, maintained that this meant his belief that it was 'the better class'—or rather, the few landlords that were in the House of Lords—who would not lose! I could have embraced him for this. To Selborne it comes naturally. What *he* had meant was, that as they would all have been ruined had there been no Bill, so any rent under the Bill was a gain. They would thus 'lose nothing.' What elegance!

§ 5. *Concerning recent 'Circumstances' that have occurred in Ireland.*

These Irish murders—I use this rude word as more intelligible—make part of a very sad story. A message from the Viceroy ran:—'Lady Ripon and I *most anxious* to hear how'—poor Miss Burke (?), poor Duke (?), bear the shock. No. But 'how Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone bear it.' This was the *true* view. The addresses to me from the Irish, I said also, were truly 'gratifying,' showing adhesion to me and to my Land Bill, in spite of the murders. We, of course, pity the victims; but I have no language sufficiently condemnatory for the infatuated people who are thus rendering nugatory the enormous amount of thought, time, and labour I have expended upon them. They may henceforth 'stew in their own juice' so far as I am concerned. It was for them that I peremptorily ordered political economy to retire to Jupiter and Saturn; for them I settled the Land Question—but the subject sickens me. Of course my Land Act is completely and thoroughly successful—so I read in all our rather too zealous newspapers, who insist that the peasant is clamorously grateful, and rushing 70,000 strong to the courts. They are probably right, though



I think my own qualification is more judicious, for I say that 'time is absolutely necessary' for the healing measure to make its way. Take note of this, by the way, my dear boy. When a matter, expected to be of instant relief, does not operate, you can always say that 'time is of the essence of the question,' and time is an indefinite quantity. Between ourselves, I see no signs of amendment; and, logically speaking, this 'time' argument does not hold water. I fear if Sir W. Gull were to prescribe a remedy as infallible which produced no effect whatever, he would hardly be allowed this plea of time; or, at least, some immediate token of amendment would be looked for, to pacify the patient's friends.

I confess I lose all restraint when I see the state of things I have to encounter. Everything is going wrong. I set all in motion, but nothing will go straight. Two precious years slipped away, when I might have been hurrying from one triumph to another, cutting down upas-trees in all directions! I see too plainly that all my efforts in future will have to be directed to patching up this wretched Irish one-horse 'shay,' and trying to get it dragged along the wretched roads of that miserable country. I cannot describe how sickened and disappointed I am.

There is another matter, too. I am told that some of the vile, low, scurrilous weekly prints dare to issue what may be called *caricatures* of me, set out with an attempt at ridicule and grotesque. I do not see, nor care to see, these degrading attempts; indeed, I have found that your mother, well-meaning in her way, has attempted a sort of censorship on the tide of scurrility which the Tory press indulges in, as if I cared! I learn, too, from an anonymous scribbler, whose letter

escaped her vigilance, that at music-halls my name is twisted into their ribald rhymes, and is received with merriment. At a shop at the corner of Parliament Street, which I pass as I go to the House, I have myself noted a monster sort of cartoon, a scandalous, outrageous libel, in which I am portrayed in charcoal tints, seated on a throne, holding my axe, Chamberlain and Bright swinging censers before me in adoration, while houses flame and men are seen shot down in the night all about me. How is it that this is allowed? Where are the people that once called me the 'People's William'? God forbid that I should incite to outrage or violence; but I will say that there is reasonable cause for 'calling the attention of the people to the matter,' much as the chapel-bell calls us all to prayer of Sundays.

The 'chapel-bell' suggests that late Irish outrage, when the poor lady, returning from church, was shot unintentionally by some Irreconcilable, who, I suppose, wished 'to draw attention' to what he considered his grievances. There was, it seems, a miscarriage, the shot being intended for her companion, a gentleman who addressed me a letter on the subject. To this, one of my latest lucubrations, I will now call your attention, as it is, in truth, a perfect *tour de force*. For if, in the course of your life, my dear Herbert, a man were ever to charge you with having been the cause of his relation's murder, you would probably be puzzled how to reply with dignity and effect. There are, of course, the common, clumsy ways of meeting such a charge. It is 'untrue.' 'You are grieved at such a charge.' You 'disdain to reply to it.' You 'acknowledge the receipt of it' simply, or take no notice whatever of it. But by none of these would you show

yourself superior. The man wrote : 'SIR,—Your practical adhesion to the principle that "Force is no remedy" in the case of Irish savagery has culminated here in making it easy for the assassin guerrilla of the Land League to murder my sister-in-law, Mrs. H. Smythe, yesterday. I lay the guilt of the deed of blood at your door, in the face of the whole country.—W. B. SMYTHE.'

Think again, for a moment, how you would reply ; then see how I treat him. The recipe is to return him a blessing for his curse ! It is beautiful to answer to one who says, 'I lay the murder of my sister-in-law at your door,' 'You, sir, have my deep and heartfelt sympathy.' I wrote :

'SIR,—I am directed by Mr. Gladstone to acquaint you that he has this morning received your letter, and he begs to assure you of his deep and heartfelt sympathy with you on the occasion of this terrible outrage which has been committed. He is confident that you will readily understand why he does not notice the matters of charge contained in your communication.'

I don't know why, by the way, I added the words *which has been committed* ; for, of course, if there were an 'occasion' arising from an outrage, that outrage must have been 'committed.' Then note the last stroke : 'he is confident that you will readily understand why,' etc. The very fact of the man urging these 'matters of charge' shows that he expected them to be noticed. Now if he expected them to be noticed, there was no need to remind him that 'he will readily understand' why they are *not* noticed. The whole, however, in any case, leaves me in a grand superiority over him.

But the whole thing makes me despair sometimes. It was in the general Irish failure and confusion that I supplied the true key—the fault of the landlords, their helplessness, want of spirit; they did not assert their rights and the law. Of course they said we had suspended all law, so how were they to assert it? But the cry was a capital one; the kingdom ought to have rung with it. ‘See this most heaven-born of heaven-born Ministers working himself into the grave, banishing political economy from the earth, becoming a “grand old man” (faugh!); saving, regenerating the Irish people; sending messages of peace one after the other.’ Yet these fellows will not co-operate; they stand aside helplessly, leaving to me, the police, and military, the duty of protecting them, which we can’t do.

### § 6. *Foolish Praises of Myself.*

I notice of late an absurd form of *mal à propos* compliment, which is *outré* and not wanted at this address. Some of the papers, in a sort of rapture, speak of me as ‘the Grand Old Man.’ Now I wish these well-meaning people would understand that I look on this mode of addressing me as utterly far-fetched, inappropriate, and even ridiculous. Grand old man, forsooth! There is a coarseness, an indelicacy, as though I were something venerable with a flowing white beard. I want no such compliments. I am the Prime Minister, full of extraordinary vigour and energy. They count and add up the stretch of hours I sit in the House, how many minutes I give to dinner. I am seen striding across the Park at a rapid pace; I speak at enormous length; I find time to read ‘John Inglesant.’ ‘Grand old man!’ These are the

*bêtises* that make me lose all patience; and these ninnies of the press do not see in their idiocy that, by starting such a cry, it will be taken up, grow familiar, and be associated with me, all by way of compliment. I am not 'grand,' nor do I wish to be. I am keen, wide-awake, incisive, eagle-like fixing my talons in a Chaplin or an Ashmead-Bartlett. I carry all away in a whirl of fascinating eloquence, and cause inextinguishable laughter by playing humorously with a topic (you will recall the 'retention' passage). In the *salons* I hold enchained, and in tones not unmusical, two, ay, three, of our fairest and most brilliant dames. Nor in the matter of the lighter graces and arts am I behind; and it is no breach of confidence to say that the beautiful L——y, who, to my view, has more than earned her theatrical brevet—you need not allude to this at our dinner table, as it might be made matter of contention—owes much to my suggestions.

‘These things to hear  
Did Desdemona seriously incline.’

And thus ‘grand old man,’ and James, too (I allude to the Attorney-General), with his ‘That great, *that wondrous man*,’ seem equally *mal à propos*. The truth is, these men are clumsy; they don’t know the value of words and epithets. Such foolish phrases, I repeat, send abroad the idea of *senility*, which is nonsensical. I have no objection to the complex association of overwork: the jaded head of the Government harassed, hunted, worn down, doing everything, answering everything, seen everywhere; yet ever unflagging, full of animation. But this throwing up the hands, and your ‘grand and your wondrous old man’ make me lose all patience. Apply



the terms, if you will, to such fogies as the late Lord Aberdeen, Lord Palmerston, Earl Grey, Lord Russell, and the like. These venerable persons gradually subsided and waned out. Their grey locks excited respect and homage; they spoke in low benignant tones; they appeared to bury the old political animosities, and were amiably forbearing to old opponents. They were mellowed in their decay, not to say feeble. I can call to mind no instance of their careering over the kingdom, addressing vast meetings, two a day, for weeks; speaking from railway-carriage windows, their wives holding on at their coat-tails. Did they cut down trees, the crowd shouting at every stroke and purchasing the chips? Did they fill two or three dozen of halfpenny postcards per day? Did they, or *could* they, read the morning lesson, in a justly-celebrated musical voice, and arrayed in a surplice? No, no, you 'grand old men;' nor could I, were I a 'grand old man.'

§ 7. *Fine Specimen of Disguised Meaning.*

I will now tell you something that will make you smile. I recall a certain Ministerial crisis, during the throes of which it occurred to me to address 'a memorandum' to her Most Gracious Majesty herself—taking her, as it were, into my confidence. Lately coming on this paper, I could not, I own, to use the hackneyed phrase, 'make head nor tail of it;' but then this may have been the effect intended to have been produced on others. It is comic being thus hoist on one's own little petard. I declare at this moment, as I read it, I have completely forgotten what it was intended to do; and I am not surprised to find the *Times* newspaper declaring that the House was not a little puzzled as it listened:

‘Mr. Gladstone will not and does not suppose that the efforts of the Opposition to defeat the Government on Wednesday morning were made with a previously-formed intention on their part to refuse any aid to your Majesty, if the need should arise, in providing for the government of the country; and the summary refusal, which is the only part before him, he takes to be not in full correspondence either with the exigencies of the case, or, as he has shown, with parliamentary usage. In humbly submitting this representation to your Majesty, Mr. Gladstone’s wish is to point out the difficulties in which he would find himself placed were he to ask your Majesty for authority to inquire from his late colleagues whether they, or any of them, were prepared, if your Majesty should call on them, to resume their offices; for they would certainly, he is persuaded, call on him for their own honour, and in order to the usefulness of their future service, if it should be rendered, to prove to them that according to usage every means had been exhausted on the part of the Opposition for providing for the government of the country, or at least that nothing more was to be expected from that quarter.’

In the next instance I wished to say, so far as I follow the matter now, that the resignation of a Ministry, with its resumption of office after a short interval, amounted to a crisis of gravity. This might seem a truism; but, according to my feelings and principles, such a statement demands language of corresponding grandeur and involution, and such as, you know, I am ever prepared to supply. See now, and strive to imitate, if you can, the amazing fertility of phrase in which I enwrap this simple idea.

‘It is in Mr. Gladstone’s view,’ I wrote to the

Queen, 'of the utmost importance to the public welfare that the nation should be constantly aware that the parliamentary action certain, or likely, to take effect in the overthrow of a Government, the reception and treatment of a summons from your Majesty to meet the necessity which such action has powerfully aided in creating, and again, the resumption of office by those who have deliberately laid it down, are uniformly viewed as matters of the utmost gravity, requiring time, counsel, and deliberation among those who are parties to them, and attended with serious responsibilities.'

Taking this sentence to pieces, analyzing the bearing of its various parts on each other, you will find the structure or skeleton to be thus arranged :

'I think *that* it is important for the nation, *that* the nation should know, *that* the action, etc., *that* overthrows a Government be viewed as important so *that* it requires deliberation.'

### § 8. *Ingenious Mode of Repudiating an Utterance.*

The following form is useful as a *dernier ressort*, but I own not safe, save when used by myself. It is a sort of *gambit*, as they say in chess. When the Black Sea Treaty was being torn up, I sent Odo Russell to Bismarck with a threat that if this were attempted we should go to war with Russia. As she persisted, we found it more convenient to take no notice, and I as usual 'discharged my mind' of the business. Meddlesome busybodies found it out, however, and pressed me with questions. The thing had to be denied *tout bonnement*. But how, my dear boy? Own it was an original unexpected stroke. I simply *conveyed* that no statement of such a nature had been made to

Bismarck. That if it had, Odo had made it without instructions and of his own motion. But note this further stroke. Not only had Odo Russell been not instructed to use the threat, which I further contended had *never* been used at all; it was Bismarck himself that had used the words, which had been thus, by a mistake, put into the mouth of Odo!

‘The Chancellor,’ so ran Odo’s despatch, ‘offered to take the initiative of proposing a Conference for the purpose of endeavouring to find a pacific solution to a question which I had frankly proved to him was of a nature to compel us, with or without allies, to go to war with Russia.’ ‘This,’ I said, ‘I understood to have *been the language of Count Bismarck.*’ He was only *quoting* the words of Odo Russell! What science, my dear boy! In this connection I may mention a kindred touch equally original. There are various modes of dealing with protests that are disagreeable and *mal à propos*: curt acknowledgment, explanation, satire, like Lord J. Russell to a Dean in the case of Bishop Hampden, ‘I have received your letter, in which you announce your intention of disobeying the law.’ My own particular recipe is rather original; deny that you have officially received it! The Irish Judges, on whom I cast the duty of jurymen, drew up a formal appeal which they forwarded to me, to Downing Street, now actually my private residence. Weeks went by, they received no answer; and when, grown impatient at last, they pressed for one, I stated in the House with much innocence that their appeal had never come before me! In a *communiqué*, to the *Observer* I think, they announced their future course:

‘In consequence of the statement made by the

Premier in the House of Commons on Monday night with regard to a communication from the Irish Judges, the Judges again met yesterday in the Four Courts, Dublin. Their lordships passed a resolution reiterating the remonstrances previously expressed by them and embodied in the resolution published a week ago, *a copy of which was forwarded to Mr. Gladstone in Downing Street. To prevent any further misapprehension on the subject, the Lord Chancellor was requested, and undertook, to communicate the decision arrived at by the Judges to the Lord Lieutenant, as a member of the Cabinet.*

There is here, I suppose, something intended in the nature of sarcastic rebuke.

In further illustration, a curious instance from my own experience recurs to me. That virulent, over-much overrated politician, the late Lord Beaconsfield, once accused me of having welcomed a mob of riotous persons at my house in Carlton Gardens. It was about the time of the Park Riots. He had the insolence to add that I had addressed the mob from the windows or steps of my own house. Thinking of my favourite *de l'audace*, I said, in reply, there was '*not a single shred, syllable, or shadow of truth in it!*' That disposed of him and of his two stories. It so happened that a *member of my family* had appeared on the balcony—how like, dear H., 'the hotel at Killarney' distinction!—and but a few days later I did welcome Finlan and other leaders of the mob—'like a father,' they said; but these 'variances' in the indictment, as lawyers call 'em, make all the difference.

This Finlan, who waited on me with a number of his fellows, was received cordially by me. I told him that 'I was always pleased to see a deputation of real



working men, such as those *were* before me.' They spoke to me of their intended meeting in the parks on the following Sunday, and asked my opinion or support, on which I said: 'Though not called on to enunciate my opinion upon it, I thought——' they were justified in holding this meeting? They were ill-advised in taking such a course? I approved of the step, or was wholly against it? Nothing of the kind. 'I thought the reasons they urged *were worthy of consideration.*'

That is capable, in the future, of being approved or the reverse. Finlan and his friends were likely to be useful. It is true that a few days before they had held meetings, at which 'Away with the Bishops!' and disloyal cries were heard: while Finlan, I believe, had already threatened Hardy with the fate of the so-called Manchester martyrs.

### § 9. *Incidents from my Private Life.*

At one period there was a sort of affectionate tone, reaching almost to endearment, in the popular manifestations towards me. I used to be 'the People's William'—an epithet devised by one of the penny papers. I note that this has been somewhat enfeebled of late. How pretty, for instance, was the following, written in the year 1869—*cheu fugaces, Herberte!* I had been speaking at the opening of some school—treating it humanly and divinely—and listening to the exercises, when the Vicar, carried away by the not unnatural enthusiasm of the moment, conceived 'that a portion of the school fund might be used *to place a brass plate where Mr. Gladstone had that evening sat.*' It was curious, this idolatry reaching even to the least noble portion of the human person. Whatever I

touched was to be immortal. Fancy the future scholars looking at the venerated chair and the inlaid plate! I think the Vicar imported a needless doubt into the business: for there could be no hesitation in laying the charge on the fund; the auditors would scarcely have disallowed it. Of course it was meant as an addition to the compliment that the few shillings' outlay should come out of public money. I wonder, by the way, *has* the memorial plate been inlaid?

I often look back, with feelings of placid enjoyment, to that season when I steamed round the kingdom, the idol of the nation; and I contrast it with the somewhat sluggish tone that is abroad now. (Those wretched Irish have undone me!) I was lately reading over what may be called the diary of my movements kept by the *Times* reporter. How strange to note how he—whose function is judicial almost—caught the enthusiasm! Yet I do not think it overdrawn.

Here are a few pleasing extracts: 'Off Falmouth.—*Small incidents have pleased Mr. Gladstone very much. He went in a launch to sail round the harbour.*' . . . 'This morning he has been extremely well, and a remark of his to Dr. Andrew Clark may be quoted *as an example of his playful fancy* and consideration for others—"You are like the tea-maker, *who provides tea for others, and starves.* You make health for other people, but no one asks after yours." I now don't think this quite holds. Your dear mother, though making tea occasionally, does *not* starve. 'The ship's bell tolled for evening prayers. The Rev. Stephen Gladstone read the service; *the Prime Minister read the lessons.* Such of the ship's crew as were not on the watch came in to join in the service. The ladies' voices led the singing. *The Prime Minister sometimes read to*

*himself, and sometimes joined in the singing.* (I change the scene to the coast of Scotland.) ‘Mr. Gladstone rose at a quarter past six. Arran was wrapped in mist. The Prime Minister *was half an hour later than usual at breakfast, appearing at 9 instead of 8:30.* He is extremely well, and has been *telling stories of his early voyages in the Mediterranean—how, when in a storm, the sailors took to prayers, and he and Lord Kinnaird were in danger of their lives.* Samuel Johnson’s verses on Skye interested him very much. *It seems they contain a false quantity.*’ . . . When off ‘the bold, rocky coast of Cape Wrath, *Mr. Gladstone came on the bridge to observe it. . . .* Again, ‘Mr. Gladstone *is now sitting on the bridge enjoying the fine weather.*’ . . . ‘Mr. Gladstone *has repeatedly said, both yesterday and to-day, that he was charmed by the scene and invigorated by the fine air.*’

Having taken up Pennington, the actor, I was obliged to attend his benefit at the Liverpool Theatre. But it was not without compunction, for I had an ovation, as it is called, and I was enabled to deliver myself of some remarks, from the ‘retention’ of which I should otherwise have suffered inconceivably. ‘Mr. Gladstone stated to the box-keeper that it was just fifty years since he last paid the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, a visit. *That was before he wrote his essay on Church and State.* Pennington was a trooper in the 11th Hussars, and is, so to speak, a *protégé* of Mr. Gladstone’s. Years ago this artist’s talent was brought under the right hon. gentleman’s notice, who gave him kindly support and encouragement.’ Interesting, is it not? But he *ought* to have succeeded better.

In the year 1867 I did some extraordinary feats, nothing of course in comparison with my Midlothian

exercises. People were then struck with wonder at my five speeches within twenty-four hours. A scurrilous weekly print, the *Saturday Review*, chose—not seeing that it is paying a compliment—to make some such analysis as this of my remarkable feat. Well might Sir H. James, my own Attorney-General, bursting into idolatrous raptures, exclaim, ‘*That great, that wondrous man!*’

‘The syllabus of the triform lecture, in 1867, at Oldham, would be something like this: Mr. Gladstone’s opinion of himself; of Lancashire in general, and Oldham in particular; of free trade; of the French Treaty and Mr. Cobden; of the Reform Act; of education; of Ireland; of public economy; of private spendthriftness; of education *bis*; of Fenianism and Clerkenwell; of Ireland *bis*; of Mr. Gladstone *bis*; of education again; of education general; of education special; of education as a process of (1) refining, (2) expanding, (3) elevating, and (4) consolidating character; of self-help; of instruction; of relaxation and amusements; *of a billiard-table*; of French and other tongues; of the English language; of the analogy between the English language and the English constitution; of the history of England; of the literature of England; of all *other* history; of all *other* literature and history; of natural history; of phythology, dendrology, anthology, ornithology, and entomology in general and particular; of Providence and first causes; of eyes and no eyes; of the comparative advantages of town and country life; of the Smoke Act and the pollution of rivers; of Mr. Platt; of Mr. Gladstone again; of the English Universities; of public schools, middle-schools; of popular education; of education; of religion; of denominational and secular educa-

tion ; of co-operative stores ; of temperance societies ; of Sunday regulation ; of Trades Unions ; of strikes ; of capital and labour ; of machinery ; of foreign competition ; of taste ; of art ; of law ; of Providence generally.' There were, this organ calculated, no less than *seventy-one* subjects treated. I may add an item to this statistic, not of an inglorious kind. During the South Lancashire campaign, some person with plenty of leisure totted up the number of *words* I uttered, viz., over 59,000, and calculated that I had filled thirty columns of a newspaper. But I smile at this *now*. We had not come to the Midlothian days yet.

A Liverpool photographer devised a scheme for securing 'negatives' of great men, and storing them in a museum. He applied to me as one of the 'great men.' The scene that followed—this was in 1864, before the almost delirious worship of these last years had set in—is pleasing to recall, as showing me in my most engaging of humours, placidly frolicsome without effort, and engagingly witty. 'Mr. Gladstone, on Friday, gave his assistance towards carrying out this scheme. He was soon placed in a position to admit of a characteristic portrait being taken.' The difficulty, however, was to fix my attention, naturally my great mind and greater thoughts straying away to the nation, etc. What followed is amusingly characteristic, and you will laugh heartily with me and your mother. 'The photographer put his hand in his waistcoat pocket, drew out a sovereign, balanced it adroitly on the back of a chair, and asked Mr. Gladstone to look intently at the coin. Mr. Gladstone said "that Mr McLachlan had selected the best possible thing for him to look at ; it was *quite a bait*." Mrs. Gladstone said that Mr. McLachlan had shown that he possessed



a deep knowledge of human nature. *After the mirth, in which all present joined, had subsided, two or three successful portraits of Mr. Gladstone were taken.* You see me ‘posed,’ as it is called, smilingly contemplating the coin, the whole studio convulsed, re-echoing to peals and peals of extravagant laughter, as I repeat ‘it is quite a bait;’ though I must confess your good mother’s jest that the artist ‘had shown he possessed a deep knowledge of human nature,’ beside lacking breadth of humour, was *mal à propos*; for both she and he are much mistaken if they think they have knowledge, still less ‘a deep knowledge,’ of *my* human nature.

But did you ever, my dear Herbert, hear of a society known as ‘The Loyal Order of Ancient Shepherds?’ It must be akin, I think, to the order of ‘Buffaloes.’ In 1878 I was asked to join the ‘Ancient Shepherds’ as an honorary member, and consented with pleasure. It entailed, however, for which I was not prepared, one of those dreadful ‘deputations to Hawarden,’ when the ‘Chief Shepherd of the district’ attended to present me with ‘the emblem of the order in a handsome frame, in commemoration of the event.’ I confess I was somewhat touched by the solemnity, and told the ancient Chief Shepherd that ‘*I should regard the emblem with feelings of pleasure.*’ The worthy fellows pictured me harassed with political trials; but a single glance at the framed emblem—hung, say, in my bedroom—would bring me pleasure. In conclusion, I told them that ‘I should always be ready to co-operate with them to promote the benefit of the order.’ In which undertaking, note certain prudent limitations useful for you to study. For I need not tell you there would be a ridicule in a person of my position seriously working for Odd Fellows,

Foresters, Antediluvian Buffaloes, and such like. I promise, not to 'promote' the benefit of the order, but merely to hold myself 'ready.' Let that pass.

Another pretty scene was described in almost pastoral style. I vow to you, my dear H., as I read these sketches over, there is something touching in the record. Ah, boy! I could wield the axe metallic, as well as politic, then! Engaged three days, for three hours each day, in cutting down a beech-tree, at Hagley, which measured in girth no less than fourteen feet, 'if we are correctly informed,' said the country paper (and they were), 'this is not the only occasion in which the Premier has found recreation in wood-cleaving, for we understand that in the recent visit of his Grace the Archbishop of Syra to Hallowarden, he was discovered *busily employed in sawing planks* for the completion of a job of *joiner's work* which he had carried forward to an advanced stage.'

Again I ask, why were not these things painted? I say there was a great artistic opportunity lost here. The Greek Prelate in his robes; I in my shirt-sleeves, busy with my plane and saw, and an expression 'don't bother me' on my face. I often wondered Millais was not got, but it is too late now. Not ungraceful, too, was my encomium of a walking-stick which I held in my hand when addressing excursionists to the family seat, in days before we were compelled to suspend admission to the grounds. I told them that this implement 'united all excellences: it is light to carry, comfortable to hold, and hard to hit with.' Dean Swift, I believe, once wrote an essay on a broomstick.

§ 10. *Myself a Fagot-Voter.*

You will recall the splendid contest for Midlothian—alas, how changed the general tone now!—when there arose that terrible scandal of the Buccleugh faction creating ‘fagot-votes’ in fraud of my candidature. This monstrous abuse—doubly infamous when applied in prejudice of a man in the position I hold—naturally roused the generous indignation of our party. It came as an awkwardness, however, when some busybodies—those Burkes and Hares who practise their resurrection-work in the graveyards of the old newspapers—dug up the fact that I myself was a fagot-voter, together with two of my brothers, and that our late worthy father had actually endowed us with these votes. This occurred about the year 1845, when it seems I claimed registry under my fagot-vote, which was rejected by the Court as being a colourable or ‘fictitious qualification.’ I appealed to a higher tribunal, but the judgment was affirmed. I call this awkward, not because I ever think (I speak seriously) there is any parallel between my own case and that of others, even though on ‘all fours,’ as it is called, but to show you with what ease the extrication is found. The argument is ingenious—but note, I begin by an *in toto* denial: ‘*As far as I can remember* what happened thirty-three years ago, the statements of the *Courant* are, I will not say *false*, but *groundless*. My recollection is that my father possessed a *small* estate in Ross-shire, and, having four sons who were dependent on him, did give them four sections of his property, or *bonâ fide* rights of law in relation to it, which made them *bonâ fide* voters for the county, and that these claims were admitted and duly registered.’

You see, 'four sections of his property'—'*bonâ fide* rights of law in relation to it;' thus conveying the idea that he was providing for them with these 'sections,' they being 'dependent' on him. I then affirm that these votes were duly registered; and you may presume that the story of the appeal, rejection, 'fictitious qualification,' is, '*I will not say false, but groundless.*'

This happy phrase furnishes a valuable working-tool. There are innumerable statements of my own which adversaries impudently hold to be untrue, but which I can prove are, 'I will not say false, but groundless.' Now to apply this. You see, though I begin by appearing to deny, I am careful to allude to the long interval and my 'recollection.' Then I proceed to argue: 'I will not excuse a transaction which wants no excuse, for I do not complain of the Duke of Buccleugh investing his own children, *dependent on him, with rights of property, conveying electoral rights in respect of a portion of what they received from him.* Such were the votes, *according to my recollection,* in Ross-shire, and such are *not* the fagot-votes which will now long be remembered in connection with the county of Midlothian.'

This is rather an involved description of fagot-voting, but it comes round to this—that an 'awkward' act, when it is done by a father for his child, ceases to be awkward; or, to extend the principle, a similar act done by a Prime Minister for one of his followers—or, in yet further extension, by ME for myself or any one of my adoption, destroys all vulgar analogies.

You will recollect how, by a vulgar *tu quoque*, we were charged with being a slave-holding family, and that we had asked and received compensation 'to the tune,' as it is called, of some sixty thousand pounds.

All this is annoying, awkward, and out of place. These doings of my worthy father recur inconveniently; hence I reminded the person to whom I was writing on the 'fagot-vote' question to bear in mind 'that, had this transaction been as blameworthy as it was innocent, the blame *must have belonged to Toryism, and not to the Liberal party.*' The Parent Gladstone was in fault.

§ 11. *Serious Vindication of Sir B. Roche and his Bird.*

I cannot too strongly press upon you that the point to study in my varied writings, answers to letters, requests, etc., is the art of making an apparent acceptance, or what simulates an acceptance, wrap up a real refusal. How easy a thing, for instance, is it for you and others to decline to speak at 'such a place' on the ground of 'numerous engagements elsewhere'! 'The simple truth is that I have undertaken in Midlothian *at least as much as I can hope that my strength will suffice to perform*; and that, conjointly with this, I have had a stream of invitations to *undertake various engagements elsewhere at the same time*—invitations all of them supported by many excellent reasons, *which I cannot distinguish by any broad line one from another*, and which, unhappily, I have therefore no option but to decline. You will readily believe in the reluctance with which I send you this reply.' I need not tell you that this 'reluctance' is not simulated, '*for if the limitations of time and space could have been put aside in my favour, I would have accepted all the invitations.*'

This is better put than Sir Boyle did it, who remarked (I fancy in burlesque) that 'he could not be in two places at once, *barring* he was a bird'—a foolish addition.



§ 12. *Inquisitiveness as to Change in my Religious Opinions.*

Again. Whalley once wrote to me to know, 'Had I gone over to Rome?'—a question almost stereotyped in its reiteration. I might have replied, 'No; I am still a Protestant and member of the Church of England.' But a happy form—reminiscence of my boyish days, when I was taken to see the pantomime—recurred to me. The pantaloon remonstrates with his friend and apparent tormentor, the clown, on his abstraction of some property, which was patent to all. 'You stole that leg of mutton from me, Joey!' 'I didn't.' 'Why, I saw you, Joey!' '*Then I'm a liar!*' 'No, no, Joey; I don't say that.' This always seemed an admirable mode of vindicating credit impeached in one direction by maintaining that it amounted to grosser impeachment in another. See how I applied it. I replied (to Whalley) 'that the question amounted to this, whether I was the basest creature in the kingdom; that if I were guilty of such duplicity, I ought to be turned out of office.'

In a similar spirit I wrote to another interrogator on the same subject: 'He,' that is I, 'cannot undertake to contradict this or any other imputation, which is alike foolish and insulting. He,' that is I, 'is quite content to leave the matter to the good sense of his countrymen; for if his acts do not confute such imputations, *he is convinced that his words will not do so.*' You see, exactly pantaloon's point. 'Then I'm a liar, Joey!'—almost his words.

Yet on another occasion, long ago, before I had become the very flail of the Pope, I recollect receiving a memorial from natives of that oddly-named place

*Stradbally*—‘the inhabitants of Stradbally,’ as they put it—‘to beg that I would protect their Pope in the exercise of his spiritual duties, and secure him an adequate income,’ for it seems the Italians had entered, or were entering, his territory, and *Stradbally* was stirred to its centre. I do not know, at this moment, what prompted me, but I *did* answer in cordial and sympathetic terms, assuring them that ‘her Majesty’s Government’ held all that related to the ‘adequate support of the dignity of the Pope, and his personal freedom and independence in the discharge of his functions, to be legitimate matter for their notice.’ I could make ‘notice’ elastic enough, but this by the way. Reads strangely now, does it not? The Scotch, however, took the alarm, and Dr. Candlish, on behalf of the Presbytery, wrote for an explanation. See what I did. In reply I referred him to a private letter written to a friend, which the doctor told his audience ‘*was almost, if not altogether, satisfactory.*’ The very criticism I hoped to invite! Nay, I may tell you that in almost every written communication of a crucial nature, I strive to leave an impression upon the recipient’s mind that shall be ‘almost, if not wholly, satisfactory.’ Almost or wholly satisfactory are well enough as distinct categories; but a combination of both is better.

For it thus leaves things in a state of balance, and I can depress or raise either arm as the occasion hereafter shall require. This was not all; others might like to apply their judgment to ‘the private letter written to a friend, and shown to Dr. Candlish, on whom it left an almost, if not altogether, satisfactory impression.’ But this would have disturbed the balance. So in a public letter to Candlish, I say

that I at one time intended making the private letter public ; but on the advice of my colleagues had determined to wait until Parliament assembled. This did not answer. Kinnaird pressed me hard on the matter, and I was fortunately enabled to minimize or dilute, accepting the sense or gloss that he put on my words, that anything like imprisonment would be improper, and 'that so long as no restraint is placed upon the Pope's person by the civil power, his dignity is sufficiently looked after.' In connection with this matter, I will here supply other specimens of my mode.

One Page Hopps, a Unitarian minister, once called my attention to a passage in my republished works, on Blanco White, and which describes him feeding on Unitarianism 'as a starving garrison make a banquet upon a supply of garbage.' On Hopps objecting to the inference to be drawn from this passage, I declare to him that my *main answer* is that the work was written thirty years ago, and that '*republication is far from being reaffirmation.*' In this latter member note the delightful ambiguity. It is as who should say, two and two is far from being four. But there is a sonorousness in the declaration that overpowers reason. For as the original publication is affirmation, so republication is reaffirmation. Whatever motive may be behind, while even you dissent from the opinion, you wish it to *stand*, and so reaffirm it.

Again, one Whitaker, of Accrington, wrote to call my attention to certain dug-up words of mine : 'Those who contend that Church and State ought to be separated know not the acuteness of Satanic instinct.' Note my reply :

‘DEAR SIR,—The words you cite, *or others like them*, were used by me in a work published forty-one years ago. They are probably true of all men, including certainly those who deny as well as those who assert that the Church and State ought to be separated. But in these forty-one years I have learnt something. I hope those who try to mislead you by citing the words can say so much for themselves.’

Now I defy you or any man to make head or tail, as it is called, of this. Do I mean by its being published forty-one years ago that it was a youthful opinion now changed for a more sensible one? You can’t tell. The words are true in both views—*i.e.*, there is a ‘Satanic instinct’ in both. Then I have ‘learnt something’ on the question, you may assume. But on which side?

### § 13. *Literary Views and Criticisms.*

I find that I am quoted as having spoken with indignation of the popular *skit*, ‘The Battle of Dorking,’ on the ground that ‘such things make England ridiculous in the eyes of foreigners, and tend to the waste of public money.’ Why these results should flow from the *brochure* in question I cannot tell. Yet, though not appreciative of this form of literature, there are other shapes which I relish keenly.

I recollect, after the Leeds victory—where practically, my dear child, *I* was returned, you being drawn home by men (in a pony-carriage, by the way)—I made a speech to the crowd, which, granting a crowd, is never likely to be wanting on my part. After speaking for some time, and ‘giving it’ to the Allsopps, up, down, and all round—they had been Tory candidates at vari-

ous places—I quoted for them ‘*a very clever epigram,*’ which, though not my own, I subjoin as a specimen of what I think to be ‘*very clever,*’ and also ‘an epigram.’ Oyez—oyez!

‘There were three jolly Allsopps who sallied forth to woo,  
One came to grief at Droitwich, then there were two.  
Two jolly Allsopps still for Parliament did run,  
But Stafford declined Charley, then there was one.  
But one jolly Allsopp would yet keep up the run;  
When East Worcestershire has settled him, then there will be  
none.’

Once, in a speech, a happy parody of ‘God save the Queen’ recurred to my mind which I had found in a clever and rather original work just sent to me. I couldn’t resist quoting it; and as the work was written by a man of advanced opinions, and who was likely to wield power over the masses, I gave it due meed of praise. I applauded ‘the good sense of some of the verses,’ though I owned some of the contents of his little volume were ‘questionable.’ ‘Questionable’ is a safe, wholesome word. I have since administered it *largely* in connection with the Irish proceedings—Land Leagues, etc. It may mean anything; for if I were asked why I did not condemn such a proceeding, did I not say it was ‘questionable’? If I had condemned a thing which I now found it desirable to praise, I had only said it was ‘questionable’! Now you would hardly guess what this little book was. Some one, of course, set to work to hunt up the name, armed with my obscure allusion, and, my dear H., it proved to be ‘*The Secularist’s Manual of Songs and Ceremonies,*’ which enjoyed ‘the hearty commendation of Mr. Bradlaugh,’ and is conceived in a keen spirit of ridicule of the Book of Books. I have no doubt my praise gave a great ‘lift,’ as it is called, to the circulation.



A person named Jennings, wishing to write a life of Cardinal Newman, applied to that eminent personage for materials, assistance, or at least approbation. All were withheld. Jennings proceeded to the completion of his task, and was good enough to forward me his completed labours. I wrote to him: 'In attempting to give an account, during his lifetime, of the most fascinating writer, I think, of his age, you have undertaken a most difficult task, and you appear to me to have performed it with marked ability, impartiality, and tact; nor is it your fault if such an *exhibition* of such a person should be indirectly favourable to a sectarian interest. The same thing would happen in another direction if a portrait equally skilful were to be drawn of Selwyn, Pattison, or Sister Dora. The Cardinal prudently renounced you and your work by anticipation; but I judge, from so much as I know of him, that he will have accepted it *ex post facto* in his happy retreat with a favourable and even a grateful feeling.' You here find me speaking *for* the Cardinal, almost guaranteeing to Jennings, in his name, the approbation which he withheld. I also attenuate, as much as I can, any favourable view of his creed.

I once delivered myself of this little gibe at the system of evolution: 'Upon the ground of what is called evolution, God is relieved of the labour of creation; in the name of unchangeable laws He is discharged from governing the world.' This was assumed to be a fairly hard argument against the system, and Herbert Spencer spoke of me as an 'opponent' of it. Now, I did not *say* that I was an opponent, or condemn it *ex cathedrâ*. At all events, I could not resist the opening for a little of my favourite refining, so I wrote that 'I was astonished that I

should have been thought to say anything that could have been construed into a condemnation of evolution.' I had expressed—which no one could deny—neither approbation or the reverse of the system. Of course, I might be pressed with the fact that I said that God is *not* discharged from governing the world by any system, but I contend that no one had any right to draw from my statement any evidence of hostility.

#### § 14. *Good and Original Mode of Put-off.*

Suppose some subject of an inconvenient or *rococo* character, that you wish to have nothing to do with : here is your recipe :

1. You were once 'well up' in it, when it seemed a most important matter.

2. 'Tis so serious that a resident or local man might deal with it far better.

3. You would be delighted to take it up in the future, but should not like to come forward or make a beginning.

This seems jejune enough with such scaffolding poles. But an illustration will show you what I mean :

'SIR,—The subject to which you invite my attention was, I know, one that presented a very grave aspect when I knew more of it than I do now. For nearly thirty years I have had no practical means of considering it, and I am of opinion that it would be prosecuted with much more scope of useful results by a resident in Scotland, than by one residing at a distance, as well as very fully occupied. At the same time, I should at any time give it such attention as I could, but without any idea of taking the initiative.'

§ 15. *Old Penchant for Public-Houses.*

The increasing pressure put on me by your Wilfrid Lawson's Sunday Closing Bills, Local Optionists, Coffee-Palaces, and other unmeaning and fanatical shapes of self-denial in reference to stimulating liquor, forces me, I confess, to regard with an almost tenderness those places to which 'persons resort' when in want of alcoholic 'liquors for domestic uses' (*i.e.*, the 'jug-and-bottle' entrance).

Now, I think that after all I could hardly blame the general public for fancying that my feelings turned in the direction of the stimulant; and you will especially recall how I more particularly threw my mantle over those who made practical use of 'the private entrance.' It was necessary that I should promptly redress the balance, and curiously enough the occasion speedily offered in an invitation—not to attend the opening, but actually *to* open a new coffee-tavern. I did not find it convenient so to attend, for 'I am obliged by engagements elsewhere to leave London on the morning of Saturday for Flintshire, and I shall be unable, *I need not say*,' (better put than Sir Boyle) 'to take part in the opening of your new coffee-tavern.'

Yet, notwithstanding this challenge, I felt bound to hold myself in due equilibrium. I make no profession of faith. I do not say that I *would* open their coffee-palace for them, if I could. I merely point out that I cannot attend. I make them a present, however, of the following, which has the *air* of adhesion, at least:

'I take, moreover, *a sincere interest* in all endeavours *justly* made to give a full and fair *trial* to this experiment, and to give the mass of the community a *fair chance*, which they have never yet had, between alco-

holic and other less exciting liquors. It may, perhaps, be of use, if you kindly think proper, to make this assurance public, as a forgery has been published in some newspapers, which I need not name, purporting to be a letter by me in condemnation of coffee-taverns.'

I am thus so far still left on my judicious standpoint.

Being later asked, would I sever 'the connection between the grocery trade and drink?' I replied that 'the principles of equality and freedom which you announce are sound, but I have no authority to speak for any party, and for myself I think that my opinions have been sufficiently, for the present, expressed in my Parliamentary acts and speeches.' Now, my dear boy, with all this *data* before you, put to yourself as a little wholesome exercise the duty of finding out what are papa's expressed and genuine opinions on the comparative merits of alcoholic stimulants, public-houses, 'bottle-and-jug department,' and coffee-palaces. Scylla or Charybdis—Sir W. Lawson or Sir Hamar Bass! The licensed victuallers are, indeed, an important and a serious body. I once actively *pleaded* for the public-house, while attending 'the opening of the Cross Keys Coffee-Tavern'—'Palace,' I think, is the later nomenclature. Speech thus neutralizes action.

'Disclaiming,' I said, 'all extravagant expectations, or what might be called revolutionary ideas, I hoped the meeting would *bring into view* the question *whether, and how far*, the institutions were likely to become an instrument of good to the population of London. For my own part, I felt that those gathered there *were not entitled to speak with severity of those who frequented the public-house*, many of them for purposes *which could not be said to be absolutely illegitimate*.'

Note the limitations of phrase. There are those

who frequent the public-house (or 'pub' as it is sometimes abbreviated, not unhappily) *in globo*, as it were; of these you are not to speak with severity, no more are you of those, 'the *many*,' who repair thither for 'purposes' which are not, or rather 'could not be said to be,' illegitimate or rather 'absolutely' so. These 'purposes' and 'absolutely' finely shroud and nullify the more common idea; though simply 'going to take a glass at a pub' might seem the only 'purpose' known to the vulgar. Indeed, the picture—persons repairing to such places for the accepted 'purposes,' either armed with their own bottles and jugs, or using the vehicles of the establishment—has for me a sort of fascination. For I find myself again and again with *gusto* recurring to it, and describing it with a variety of phrase and imagery. Thus once, after pleading for indulgence or 'a society which generally speaking had not renounced strong liquors, but of which a large part believed *in a beneficial use* of them,' the image once more rises, and I see the humble and thirsty workers repairing to that 'pub,' '*availing themselves of that which was to them the readiest mode of obtaining commodities of that kind, in conjunction with what they thought a becoming indulgence of the social instinct.*'

Again, on a Sheffield gentleman inviting me to 'take a lead' in the cause of temperance, he found I was not to be seduced into desertion of my old fealty to 'the pub' or 'public.' 'I hope that my own position, relatively to the cause of temperance, *is sufficiently defined* by the votes I have given on different questions. I have, however, no intention of *assuming any more prominent position with regard to it.*'

You see, not a supporter of temperance, but 'my position relative to the cause of temperance,' which



may be for, against, or between : 'defined,' where no 'defining' is wanted beyond yes and no. 'Votes,' too, are well enough on the question itself; but they are here 'votes on different questions.' Fairly indefinite as all this is, I won't take a more 'prominent position *with regard to it.*'

### § 16. *Grief for a Comparative Stranger.*

Sometimes you are suddenly called on for your sympathies, as of right, in the case of a person who offers little more than an abstraction or even a blank. Here you must show knowledge, and a sense of bereavement. As when Schnadhorst brought before me the decease of a certain Wright of Birmingham, whom I scarcely knew from Adam, as the phrase goes; though I may remark, *en passant*, that Adam offers very distinct prehensile features to the, or to my, mind. The man had been introduced—note the air of shock or bereavement: 'I have received with deep concern the intelligence of the death of Mr. Wright.' So far good and impressive. Now for a phrase to show that I knew him little, and yet by the force of genius proceed at once to the intimacy which ordinary men only reach by familiarity: 'My acquaintance with him was'—'slight' comes at the end of the sentence; but it would read abrupt or harsh. I interpose an eider-down cushion or two: 'My acquaintance with *him, as measured by the times I have seen him, or amount of intercourse, was slight.*' I can fancy his poor relict reading out to her friends 'as measured by the times I have seen him, or amount of intercourse,' which limitations, to her fond ear, had the import of a long-continued friendship: akin to the cheerfulness of the word 'Mesopotamia' to the old lady at church.

Knowing little or nothing of the man, I go on in the same spirit to say, 'that I was much impressed by his earnest and straightforward nature.'

### § 17. *Gift of an Axe.*

You will recall my acknowledgment of the 'six tankards.' I think the following panegyrical reception of the present of an axe quite as good: 'The axe of which you announce the despatch, has reached me in due course this afternoon. I beg you to accept, and to convey to the subscribers, my thanks for this beautiful and *tasteful gift*. Its qualities are of themselves a lesson, for it is strong, solid, of intrinsic value, not easy to be injured, and not intended to injure anything else!' H'm, my *own* character.

### § 18. *On Co-operation.*

When asked about this thorny question, I furnished this answer, putting the matter far on into the future: 'When I am *apprised* of the results of the late inquiry, I shall be able to judge of the mode of applying these principles'—that is, the inquiry is now over, and I shall wait for the results in 'a contented reserve,' or rather, until I am '*apprised*' of the results. Then, I shall not carry out 'these principles,' neither shall I 'judge of them;' but I shall be 'able' to do so, and that will have regard, not to their adoption, but to the 'mode of applying' them. I go on, 'As to the spirit in which I shall approach the subject, anyone is welcome to make inquiry *through the newspapers or otherwise*, as to the conduct and supply of my house in London through a period of forty-eight years.' That is, to gather from my tradesmen's books what allowances or tariff Mrs. G. and I have obtained in our dealings. Though I don't see at this moment how

this could be secured 'through the newspapers,' or otherwise than by the inspection of our pass-books.

§ 19. *My Dislike to the 'Law of the Land.'*

You will have noticed that during the course of my assaults on the landlords I often made a merit of, and gave as a concession, that 'I would assert the law.' Mr. Forster, you will recollect, once made proclamation that he would not carry out the law (of eviction) 'where it seemed to him to be unjust.' Chamberlain spoke in the same spirit when he said that we had purposely suspended the law to favour outrage, and gain 'momentum' for my Land Act; though he, in vulgar phrase, 'let the cat out of the bag.' This was intruding a principle that I wish to familiarize the public with—viz., that the 'law,' or whatever it is, must be a minor business as compared with ME. *L'Etat c'est moi* had nothing far-fetched in it. If I disliked a particular law, I have gone so far as to stimulate others to violate it. The Indian Press Bill I disliked, once it became 'the law of the land.' In this connection it will be interesting for you to read what I wrote to a 'native gentleman' on the subject:

'SIR,—I am sorry to learn that the Press Act has extinguished a number of native papers, but glad that in the case of some at least there has been a revival of the same spirit under the guise of another tongue.'

So too, when I assailed Beaconsfield for bringing sepoy from India, saying that the law had been "*flatly, plainly, and egregiously broken.*" Yet I feel a delight in now bringing soldiers from Simla!

Here, you see, I prompt and stimulate resistance to the established law.

I have not space to enlarge copiously on this topic, but I may epitomize. You recollect my Clerkenwell doctrine, when I laid it down that murder and explosions were useful factors in practical politics; they 'drew attention,' which would otherwise be withheld. 'Threatening letters,' too, I have thrown my shield over, declaring that to hold, as an Irish Chief Justice did, that such things 'fell into the category of serious crimes' or 'serious criminal offences,' was 'an overstatement on the part of the learned judge.' As, however, there was a noise made about it, I proceeded to my favourite minimization, employing the congenial Selborne. Here is his clever defence, worthy of Suarez. It was on a matter of pure tabulation that I spoke. 'In order to arrive at an accurate conception of the comparative state of Ireland at different periods, it had always been found necessary, when statistics of crime were referred to, to separate threatening letters from outrages and from actual crimes against person and property. In estimating the state of Ireland, such offences could not be treated in the same way as murders, shooting at dwellings, and the destruction of property. Mr. Gladstone spoke in that point of view, comparatively and not positively, when replying to a member of the House of Commons, who pressed a passage from the judge's charge into service for his own speech.'

I am not surprised that Salisbury seized on the occasion to deliver himself of some of his accustomed venom, and 'sympathized with the noble and learned lord on the constant imposition of the duty upon him of explaining the words of the Prime Minister. Mr. Gladstone's language was so peculiar that, while it was capable of acting with Ireland as an incentive to the

most dangerous passions of the people, it was also capable, by the subtle language of the Lord Chancellor, of being made to appear perfectly innocent. The noble and learned lord strained his well-known powers in attempting to establish that Mr. Gladstone had not spoken lightly of this particular class of criminal offences.'

I think, too, I spoke with sufficient tenderness of the agitation when it was preparing the ground for my Land Bill. 'Objects—some of them *perhaps legitimate*, others *more questionable*' (two delightful phrases)—'have been pursued, in our view' (but we may be wrong), 'by means that cannot for a moment pretend to the title of legitimate, and that are totally incompatible with the first conditions of a well-ordered society.' More nicely adjusted terms, and less likely to give offence to 'the people,' could not be chosen.

You will have heard of what were called the '*Collier Scandal*' and the '*Ewelme Rectory*' affair. I look on it as curious that these two kindred transactions should have occurred almost at the same time. Many supposed that I was contending for the two comparatively obscure persons whose interests were concerned. The truth was, the occasion was so piquant, that it was impossible to resist. Here I had the rare opportunity of refining away Acts of Parliament. The more the cries of sophistry, casuistry, aye, even jesuitry resounded, the more I was piqued into sustaining my cause. There was a rare pleasure, too, in finding others, under party pressure, compelled to argue against their convictions, and contend with me in ingenuity.

In the '*Collier Scandal*,' as it was impudently called, I had appointed Sir R. Collier to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, on November 3, when it



was found that by the Act of Parliament it was necessary he should have been a judge. In this difficulty I should have had to cancel his appointment, as the words were positive, when within a few days a judgeship fell vacant. 'Now,' I said, 'we can qualify him;' and we did accordingly. Such a cry, or howl rather! The 'Collier Scandal' forsooth! 'Colourable,' fictitious! As my Lord Cairns chose to put it, the question was, 'Whether Sir R. Collier was chosen by the Prime Minister as a member of the Judicial Committee because he was a judge, or whether he was made a judge because he had been already chosen a member of the Committee?' A vote of censure was actually proposed on *me* later—'the grand old man!'—and defeated by only 27 voices, which the malignant chose to say exactly represented the number of our official voices.

And the Ewelme Rectory business, too, into which I was drawn by the same irresistible relish for a crux. I appointed one Mr. Harvey to the living in question. There was a statute that no one could hold it but an Oxford man, a member of Convocation. Now Harvey was from Cambridge. *I had him made a member of the Convocation!* In this ingenious way I fancy one might cure every lack of qualification known. Again a storm was raised, but I held firm.

### § 20. *Clever Denial by 'Demand of Locality.'*

This elegant form I practised on Beaconsfield and Burnaby in 1878. I asked each, sternly, 'Where did I ever make such a statement as you have attributed to me?' I did not say 'it is untrue,' but 'find it,' though the public assume that the first is my meaning. By a happily opportune chance Beaconsfield could

not find the passage. In Burnaby's case I had a little trap prepared in addition. He had made the 'bag and baggage' passage matter of charge to me. I asked 'where did I make such a statement,' knowing he would seek it vainly in the 'Bulgarian Horrors'—save in the first edition, long out of print, and I had removed it from the later editions. The man, however, was put upon searching the first—and so the device failed.

### § 21. *Wonderful Despatch-Box Incident.*

There is really no exaggeration in the following. It occurred—I am prepared to vouch for it—exactly as described. 'A curious accident befell the Premier in the course of one of the many divisions in the House of Commons last night; with the object of saving time the right honourable gentleman had been accustomed to take his despatch-box with him into the division lobby to continue his work. On this particular occasion, *seizing the first box at his hand, he did not discover, till he was locked in the division lobby, that he had taken the Home Secretary's box.*' Strange! Not that I could see anything strange in it, when occurring to another. In the case of Beaconsfield I should have said the man was 'failing.' But it proves the amazing interest in *me*. It was given in what is called 'leaded type,' and in the most conspicuous portion of the paper—my own *Daily News*.

### § 22. *Neutral Phrase for Threatening to Resign.*

When I mean to use this whip to my followers in revolt, I do not say, '*I will resign,*' but something that *seems* to say so. I have a special term for this :

*'I should consider myself at liberty to examine my*

*position in conformity with my individual duty as an officer of the State.'*

You see! Pick your steps safely among all these eggs, after me. I will not 'examine,' but shall be 'at liberty' to do so—rather, 'should consider' myself thus. Then for this 'position,' what is it? It is one 'in conformity' (not connexion) 'with my individual duty,' which again is in conformity with a relation to the State. Such a form I could make into paper collars or Mr. Healy's 'cocked hat.'

### § 23. *On the Errington Mission.*

But if I were to point to an instructive matter in the direction of tenderly handling cobwebs, study carefully my baffling answers on the Errington Mission and the Kilmainham Treaty. I know nothing more beautiful for the delicacy of its ambiguities, and its perfect success in obfuscating truth—always a laudable aim—than these efforts.

But first for the Errington business. This gentleman went to Rome to confer with the chief of the Roman Church. Whether I despatched him thither or no, I will not confess even to you, my dear boy. Try your ingenuity in a simple exercise in the art of disguising what it is inconvenient to reveal, and tell me if you can clearly make out whether I so despatched him or not. At the same time, I was so categorically (a word I accept merely for convenience of description) pressed by the pertinacious Wolff with his 'four questions,' that I was really put to all my arts, and had to call my familiar spirits of Escobar and Mendoza to my aid. A paper habitually opposed to my policy, the *St. James's Gazette*, thus impudently, though not inaccurately characterized my replies: 'Mr. Gladstone's

answer contained not fifty words, but more than five hundred, and consisted altogether of the strangest mass of denial, admission, and irrelevant qualification that even he has ever concocted. To one only of the four questions asked him did he return a direct answer. He did not deny, though he would not admit, that Lord Granville had addressed a letter to Mr. Errington, intended to be shown to Cardinal Jacobini, and designating Mr. Errington as a gentleman through whom confidential communications could be made on public affairs to her Majesty's Secretary of State, or containing words to that effect. Nor did he either deny or admit that Cardinal Jacobini, acknowledging this letter, in a reply intended to be shown to Lord Granville, declared himself ready to confer with Mr. Errington as the recommended agent (*agente raccomandato*) of the British Government. Nor would he say whether, since then, Mr. Errington had or had not been the channel of communication between Lord Granville and Cardinal Jacobini.' This I give, though apparently against myself, to show with what art I can extricate myself from a seeming difficulty. You would think I had admitted the whole.

I repeat that, in the case of some men, such art of denial would be called simply the art of uttering a falsehood; yet I could tell the House what were the facts that had occurred, and assure it with an air of candour that 'there had been no appointing of Mr. Errington, and of course no remuneration;' that there had been '*no negotiations with Mr. Errington, no proposal made, and no request tendered to Mr. Errington.*' You will see at once how cleverly chosen these terms are: no 'appointment' of an agent; no commission in the shape of request or proposal made to the agent; no remunera-

tion. There were plenty of 'hear, hears' at this, and many were no doubt indignant at so futile a charge; for of course it seemed to mean that the agent had not been asked to go—had not been told anything to say, if he did go. But if you construe the words strictly, you will see they are consistent with what follows; for, between you and me, 'appointment' means official appointment; there was no negotiation or 'request' to do anything, though there was an understanding that he might do something. The matter was 'talked over' in what I happily styled 'intercourse' between the parties. But I must give you the sentence, which is in my own special style: '*The purport of any intercourse with Lord Granville by Mr. Errington*' (pray note this 'intercourse *with*' one person *by* another) 'had been exclusively with reference to his being a channel or medium of information.' Also note, 'had been, with reference to his being a *channel*,' etc.

Now all began to cloud rapidly. Again, Mr. Errington was not exclusively the medium of information, because 'on any occasion of any other gentleman as well qualified as Mr. Errington by character and intelligence to convey just and accurate information to Rome, Lord Granville might have been induced to think it well to supply him, or permit him to be supplied, with information of that character.'

If your excellent mother, for instance, were to send you down to Hawarden with a message to Stephen, at a moment when I required your service, and she were to deny that she did give you any message, and were to urge that you 'were not exclusively the medium of information, because on any occasion of any other gentleman as well qualified as Herbert by character and intelligence to convey just and accurate information



to the Rev. Stephen, she, Mrs. G., might have been induced to think it well to supply him, or permit him to be supplied, with information of that character,' I would retort upon her that she was simply '*talking bosh*' as well as what was untrue, and that I heartily wished Providence might have been induced to think it well to supply her, or permit her to be supplied, with 'brains' and a better morality.

Note a new and original phrase here—'on any occasion of any other gentleman.' Mr. Errington's expedition was simply a visit to the Holy City on his own account, or 'own hook,' as it is often vulgarly and expressively put; though I admit, as a general proposition, that 'her Majesty's Government did and do think it useful that many matters of great interest to the Roman Catholic subjects of her Majesty should be made known at Rome in connection with the very best information to be had.'

Everyone seemed satisfied with this explanation, though the journal aforesaid, going deeper, penetrated, as it were, into my mind with singular insight. It asked to have explained, 'What is the position of a gentleman who has not been "appointed" by the Government to any mission, who has had no "negotiations" with them, received no "proposal" from them, acceded to no "request" from them, but has held "intercourse" with them "having exclusive reference to his being a medium or channel of information," while he is yet not an "exclusive medium" of information (since other people might have been, if they were not, employed for the same purpose), and who, thus equipped, or unequipped, betakes himself to Rome, and communicates information to the Vatican which the Government think it useful he should commu-

nicate, as being "the very best information to be had"?

Having 'discharged my mind' on the matter, I left it in the hands of Dilke, who has by no means a fine touch, and through his awkwardness more of the facts of the case slipped out. I did not much care, as the incident, according to the French phrase, was *vuidé*. But it will be instructive for you to learn from this instance 'the art of ready denial.' For it then appeared that 'Lord Granville *had* an interview with Mr. Errington at Walmer, in the course of, and after which, it was arranged that Mr. Errington should go to Rome, and that Cardinal Jacobini should there receive him as the "recommended agent" of the British Government. 'It is asserted, and not denied by Sir Charles Dilke, that Lord Granville afterwards gave Mr. Errington a letter or letters recommending him in that capacity. Lastly, it is repeated, with no denial from Sir Charles Dilke, that Mr. Errington's journey to Rome was undertaken in accordance with and in pursuance of this arrangement; in proof of which it is alleged, again without effective contradiction, that Mr. Errington's expenses were paid. Sir Charles Dilke, it seems, was unable to contradict any one of these statements.'

Well, there the matter stood. I allowed a good interval to elapse, for time is a great factor in these things. The truth was—and mark! I mean the real truth, as the vulgar mean it—it would not do to blurt the thing out. The populace are shy of dealings and treaties with the Pope; yet, in the desperate state of things in Ireland, it seemed to me the only way. After an interval, then, I frankly owned how things stood. 'The British Government,' I said, 'has known for a long time that the Pope is a great social power in every

country, and perhaps in Ireland more than any other country, where the great mass of the people are Roman Catholics; and therefore in time of great social disturbance Lord Granville desired that the Pope should be well informed as to the state of that country.' As I said before, what man but myself *could* put this statement 'in synchronous harmony' with my first statement that there had been 'no appointment,' 'no negotiations,' 'no proposal made,' 'no request'? If Lord Salisbury attempted this *tour*, I know what name I should apply to him. But I am 'a wondrous man,' a 'grand——' no, pah!

I am fond, as you know, of illustrating things to you privately by modern instances. I was amused at reading in what is styled 'a society paper' this sketch—intended, of course, offensively: 'The Prime Minister, *a bunch of hyacinths in his bosom*, leaving his seat on the Treasury bench, was observed, to the consternation of the House, bowing his way to the portion of the Chamber occupied by the Secessionists. Reaching the end of the third bench, *he stopped, and, going down on one knee*, was observed whispering to The O'Healy! It is difficult, as a matter of historical accuracy, to say which felt the more astonished—the House or The O'Healy. The hon. member was evidently overcome. His professional hatred of the Saxon, his reiterated hostility to the Government, evaporated before the vision of the Prime Minister, the Great Gladstone, the "grand old man," bending before *him*—him, Tim Healy, the political adventurer and "dollar bagman" of the Land League. Mr. Healy blushed like a young thing; his dark visage underwent a remarkable change; he doffed his hat, and a look almost of obsequious submission lingered round his whilom formidable glasses,

while a sympathetic smile of conscious and eager self-abnegation played round his lips. Mr. Gladstone's mission to Mr. Healy was simply to request that gentleman to postpone a question of which he had given notice. "Did Mr. Healy assent to the proposal?" "Why, certainly!"

Now, if questioned as to what passed in this little 'intercourse with Mr. Healy by myself,' and it suited me to deny all that had passed, I could, on the Errington precedent, declare that there was 'no request tendered,' 'no negotiation'; he was 'not exclusively the medium of information,' because this might have been the 'occasion of any other gentleman.' After an interval, however, it might suit me to admit the 'intercourse,' when I could declare that 'I had known for a long time that Mr. Healy was a great social power in Ireland, and therefore in times of great social disturbance,' etc.—you see?

#### § 24. *The Treaty of Kilmainham.*

I now come to a matter that has been the cause of more annoyance and troublesome inquisition than anything I can call to mind. I allude to the so-called Kilmainham Treaty. The repudiation, denial, rejection into non-existence, or whatever it may be styled, of this transaction, has put me to all my energies and devices; and with it all, I grieve to say, it has been a complete *coup manqué*. Here is experience of what I have had to endure from the Wolffs and others. I will rehearse privately all the steps of the transaction as they really occurred, and you will contrast them with my public utterances, and give me credit for the enormous difficulty of reconciling both. Here is what I said on discovery :

‘There was no negotiation, promise, or engagement whatsoever with the suspects. I said it was not the only letter that passed. But I did say, and I repeat, that there never *was the slightest understanding* of any kind between her Majesty’s Government and the hon. member for the city of Cork. *The hon. member for the city of Cork has asked nothing and got nothing from us, and we, on our side, asked nothing and got nothing from him.*’

This, it will be seen, is denial in its broadest shape. ‘Nothing asked or received, nothing understood, nothing talked about or proposed, no negotiation.’ Perhaps on a gentleman in private life making such a declaration to you, you would be convinced that nothing of the kind had occurred. You would ‘take his word.’

I will fancy for a moment that you had been the owner of a house which I had examined, or ‘been after,’ before taking my present mansion in Harley Street; that I had first written a letter to the owner praising it and saying it was desirable, and had then sent my solicitor to meet the agent, terms and conditions being discussed between them, new drainage-pipes suggested, while the agent volunteered that the gentleman, if a handsome price were given, ‘would forward Mr. Gladstone’s political business’ if the bargain were concluded; and suppose, after all this, that I had entered into possession without signing or sealing. What if, on a sudden dislike to the new house, I wished to be ‘off,’ and declared that there had been ‘no negotiations, promise, or engagement whatsoever with the landlord! He asked nothing and got nothing from me; and I, on my side, asked nothing and got nothing from him.’ It might be urged that I had



been in actual possession of the house, that I had debated about the new drainage-pipes, etc. Still, I repeat, there was 'no negotiation, no engagement,' etc. I fear the proprietor of the mansion would use strong and coarse language as to my credit.

Now you will recall the Errington Vatican Mission. Here I had said : '*There has been no negotiation with Mr. E., no proposal made and no request tendered to him, and no appointment.*' It actually was brought out that the envoy had been closeted with Lord Granville, had received a letter from him to be shown to the Court of Rome, and had been received there as a recommended agent. Yet there had been *no negotiation*, no request made, etc.

Mr. Parnell, immured in the prison for many months, must have found the confinement irksome, and, as he explained to the reporter of the *New York Times*, he was tremendously exercised by the case of evicted tenants. 'For some time before my release from Kilmainham on parole to attend the funeral of my nephew in Paris, I, in common with all my fellow-prisoners, had been very much impressed with the grave situation which appeared imminent for the Irish people. We saw evictions, daily increasing in number, of poor tenants utterly unable to pay their rents, seven thousand persons having been evicted.' This was early in April. The question of 'outrages' was pressing on him too. Curiously enough, it was distracting us (the Ministers) at this very moment too. By another coincidence, Captain O'Shea was prompted to write to me on April 8th, asking 'if I would accept a statement on Irish affairs as they presented themselves to him?' Three days later came the holiday furlough from Kilmainham enjoyed by Mr. Parnell, which is clearly a part of the transaction.

Now this unprecedented incident, even if it stood alone, is one of the most singular and *bizarre* on record. Has it not something of the air of a Palais Royal farce, where people go in and out of prisons in collusion with the governor, and have 'jollifications both within and without the walls.' The ostensible pretence was the attending of 'a nephew's funeral,' which was so imperative and urgent, that it was left to a margin of about an hour or an hour and a half whether he could arrive in time. To this youth our 'suspect' was, it seems, tenderly attached, which again suggests another facetious piece, viz., 'Patience,' in which some one is bidden to 'beware a *nephew's* curse.' The result was that within twelve hours of leaving the prison it was found impossible to assist at the 'inhumation,' as the French have it, which took place the next morning, and the bereaved uncle, instead of returning to his gaol, proceeded to enjoy his liberty for more than a fortnight, a transaction which naturally excited speculation, though the key was not found till the explosion of our Treaty bomb. As he passed through London he had a conversation with his active but somewhat bungling friend O'Shea, in which he began to formulate his demands, viz., a settlement of the arrears question, and, curious to say, a claim for an increase of salary to the governor and officials of Kilmainham and other prisons (whom on May 19, when restored to full freedom, I find, he accused of treating their prisoners barbarously and brutally). 'Will you not,' said our captain, 'if the arrears be granted, use your immense personal influence in the preservation of order?' '*Most undoubtedly,*' said the other. . . Now, here were really terms of a future contract—terms of a bargain. Release was implied, as an imprisoned person could not

otherwise use his personal influence. He went on to Paris. That was on April 11. The following day arrived a letter from me, to whom Captain O'Shea, on the 13th, forwarded a letter embodying Parnell's proposals. To which, on April 15, I sent this reply :

'DEAR SIR,—I have this day received your letter of the 13th, and I will communicate with Mr. Forster *on the important and varied matter which it contains*. I will not now enter into any portion of the matter, but will simply say that no apology is required either as to the length or freedom of your letter. On the contrary, both demand my acknowledgment, and I am very sensible of the spirit in which you write. I think you assume the existence of a spirit with which we can all sympathize, *whether we have any agreement as to the means* for the attainment of the end in view, or not. Assuredly no resentment, or personal prejudice, or false shame, or other impediment extraneous to the matter itself, should prevent the Government from treading whatever path may safely lead to the pacification of Ireland.'

You see. 'Any agreement as to the means for the attainment of the end in view : ' other ministers to be consulted : a series of letters : 'the important and varied matter' in debate ! And yet, recollect, 'there has been *no negotiation*,' 'and not the slightest understanding.' Verily I am 'a great, a wondrous, a grand old man'—in the art of manipulating facts !

Now, hitherto, my dear Herbert, all has been informal. The indefatigable Captain O'Shea next applies to another Cabinet Minister, our 'Joe' Chamberlain, whom he at once brings into privy by sending

him a copy of his letter to me. The other at once answered :

‘ MY DEAR SIR,—I am *really* much obliged to you for your letter, and especially for the copy of your *important and interesting* communication to Mr. Gladstone. I am not in a position to write you fully on the subject, but I think I may say that there is *nothing* in your proposal *which does not deserve consideration*. I entirely concur in your view that it is the duty of the Government to lose no opportunity to acquaint itself with reference to opinion in Ireland, and to *welcome suggestion and criticism from whatever quarter it may come*, provided Irishmen are desirous for good government and have not a blind hatred of all government whatever. One thing is certain—that if the Government and the Liberal party generally are bound to show greater consideration than hitherto for Irish opinion, the Irish party must, on the other hand, pay some attention to public opinion in England and Scotland. *Since the present Government have been in office they have not had the slightest assistance in this direction*. On the contrary, some Irish members have acted as if their object was to embitter and prejudice English opinion. I fail to see how Irishmen can profit by such a policy; and I shall rejoice if ultimately a *more conciliatory spirit* is manifested on both sides of the House.’

It will be seen that a logical and earnest Radical, such as our Joe is, at once pointed out the only ‘consideration’ on which Government would treat. The good of Ireland and the afflicted people who would not pay rent (euphoniously styled the ‘arrear question’)

was all very well ; but the point was : *Would they support Government ?* As he frankly put it, since they had been in office 'they had not had the slightest assistance in this direction.' (Mark, still 'no negotiation'!) Next, a third Cabinet Minister, Mr. Forster, comes on the scene, and with him the Captain at once proceeded to 'negotiate' in the following style :

'My assertion that I had been in frequent communication with him, Mr. Forster has had the coolness to describe as incorrect. I retort that, beside previous communications, I talked the whole situation over while walking with him from the House of Commons to the Irish Office. Among the matter of our discussion was a foolish answer which he had drafted to Mr. Cowen's question respecting the imprisoned members, and which he was fortunately not allowed to give in the House of Commons. I had another conversation—a short one—with him later in the day, at the Irish Office, and a third interview of length in his room. During this last one he *suggested the best plan for visiting Kilmainham unostentatiously*. But I confess he appeared nervous and demoralized.

'I am afraid,' replies Forster, 'that after what he has said I must say all that I know about this negotiation. The honourable member says he was in constant communication with me. Well, I do not think that is quite correct ; but certainly I did see him two or three times. His communications, however, *were to a greater extent with the Prime Minister and a conversation with my right honourable friend the President of the Board of Trade.*'

Still 'no negotiation, my dear boy.'

'On the Friday, I think, there was a question by the honourable member for Newcastle to the effect, Would



the Government release those members, or would they not? My opinion was that I thought we could release them after either we got Ireland quiet, or got a Bill with fresh powers, or obtained a pledge from them that without any conditions whatever they would certainly not break the law—I was not so exigent as to ask them to aid in preserving the law. The hon. member did not think it would be an advantageous answer. I saw the *Prime Minister*, and he did not approve of my giving that answer. In consequence, the question was not answered by me, *but by him.*'

It will thus be seen that the patriots were a little anxious that the question of release should be formal matter of contract; but I saw at once that this might be too precise, and, if anything 'came out later,' would amount to a 'promise' or undertaking to 'give something.' I accordingly 'did not approve of Forster giving that answer.'

Well, having got so far, our Captain reported progress to his friend Parnell, who had missed seeing him, on his return, at 'Albert Mansions'—how luxuriously, by the way, are our patriots lodged!—and had returned to his gaol, where, he says: 'I received a letter from Captain O'Shea saying he was coming to see me on the subject of my conversation, and in order to save him trouble I put my views on paper in the letter which was read in the House this evening. Captain O'Shea, however, did not receive that letter in time to prevent his coming to Kilmainham. He visited me in prison and obtained my permission to show this letter to one person, but it was not to quit his hands, and was otherwise to be regarded as strictly private and confidential.' 'After that debate,' says the Captain, taking up the narrative, 'Mr. Forster

gave me leave to correspond with Mr. Parnell in Kilmainham ; and, if there was any secrecy at all, it was arranged and contrived by the right honourable gentleman. I next proceeded to Kilmainham, but said nothing to Mr. Parnell about release. The conversation was very general, but I learned that the No Rent manifesto had already been withdrawn.'

Mr. Parnell, on this being stated by his friend in the House, made the remark, 'I said it would not be further circulated,' on which the Captain said it was practically withdrawn. This, it was obvious, had been alluded to as part of the bargain. Mr. Parnell having thus put his views on paper, and explained them during his five hours' interview with his friend (the prison rules as to limitation of time for visits being suspended to suit the natural eagerness to have our 'no negotiation' concluded), Captain O'Shea left Dublin, and hurried back to show the letter. Following up the 'no bargain' and 'no negotiation' theory, I will just recall Chamberlain's *sine quâ non* that 'the party must be supported,' and that there must be an engagement to that effect. I find the injudicious Parnell complaisant enough to agree, and he added that notable and deplorable paragraph at the close, to the effect that :

*'It would, I feel sure, enable us to co-operate cordially for the future with the Liberal party in forwarding Liberal business.'*

What an age we live in ! Who, two years ago, would have thought that 'the uncrowned King of Ireland,' the noble, gallant darling of the Irish people, would agree to co-operate with 'Coercion Gladstone' and 'Buckshot Forster' in doing a political scullion's work in 'forwarding Liberal business !' As is well

known, this awkward paragraph was omitted in reading it to the House—you will see at my suggestion, that of the ‘grand old man,’ who is, after all, wise in his generation.

Well, Forster received this Parnell letter. The Captain came on Sunday morning, April 30th, to the Secretary’s house in Eccleston Square, well known for its pretty show of balcony gardening. In dealing with the patriot, Forster judiciously thought it was necessary to be careful :

‘I took a memorandum,’ he says, ‘at the time, and I shall be glad if he will correct anything in it that is inaccurate. This was the memorandum which I sent to the Prime Minister *and circulated among my colleagues*: “After telling me he had been from eleven to five o’clock with Parnell yesterday, O’Shea gave me his letter, showing that he hoped it would be a satisfactory expression of union with the Liberal party. After carefully reading it, I said to him, ‘*Is that all, do you think, that Parnell would be inclined to say?*’ He said, ‘*What more do you want?*’ Doubtless I could supplement it.’ I said, ‘It comes to this—that *upon our doing certain things* he would help us to prevent outrages,’ or words to that effect. He again said, ‘How can I supplement it?’—referring, I imagined, to other measures with regard to land reform. I did not feel justified in giving him my own opinion, which might be interpreted to be that of the Cabinet, so I said I had better *show the letter* to Mr. Gladstone and one or two others. He said, ‘If these words won’t do, I must get others.’ And then he used these remarkable words: ‘The conspiracy which has been used to get up Boycotting and outrages will now be used to put them down,’ and that there would be union in the

Liberal party. And, as an illustration of how the first of these results was to be obtained, he said that Parnell hoped to make use of a certain person and get him back from abroad, as he would be able to help him to put down conspiracy or agitation—I am not sure which word was used—as he knew all its details in the West.” I added, for the information of my colleagues: “This last statement is quite true—this man—” (I will give his name if required. It is Sheridan)—“is a released suspect, against whom we have for some time had a fresh warrant, and who, under disguises, has hitherto eluded the police, coming backwards and forwards from Egan to the outrage-mongers in the West. I did not feel myself sufficiently master of the situation to let him see what I thought of this conference; but I again told him that I could not do more at present than tell others what he had told me.”

Still, ‘no negotiation,’ ‘no bargain,’ ‘no understanding!’ This memorandum, full of negotiation, was handed to me. And not only to me, but to Chamberlain. Here, during these revelations, it will be said certain parties ‘fall out’ and vehemently charge each other with inaccuracy or worse. Our Captain did not say at Eccleston Square that ‘a conspiracy for Boycotting,’ etc.: he had merely used the word ‘organization.’ But Forster persisted in asserting his own accuracy. In a subsequent letter to the papers the Captain tried to vindicate himself:

‘The following are the facts: I myself know nothing about the organization of the Land League. But I told Mr. Forster that I had been informed by Mr. Parnell the day before that, if the arrears question were settled, that organization would explain the boon to the people and tell them that they ought to assist

the operation of the remedial measure in the tranquillization of the country.

Next, on going to Chamberlain with the paper, he says he expunged the passage of all others the most interesting to 'Joe'—that is, after showing it to him. But hear what our Joe says: 'I did not suggest to the member for Clare that he should withdraw any sentence whatever in a letter not written by him, but by another person; but it is true that he did, in conversation with me, after he had sent the original letter to my right hon. friend the late Chief Secretary, and when he was giving me a copy of that letter, say that he thought there was one sentence which might give rise to misapprehension, and which he would wish to withdraw. I must say that I did not pay very much attention to that statement, because I could *not see what authority he had to withdraw any part of the letter*. No doubt, he was on very intimate terms of friendship with Mr. Parnell, and I suppose he considered he had authority to make alterations in a letter written by his friend; but, as I have said, I did not consider the matter of sufficient importance, and I did not mention it to my colleagues.' This practical Birmingham man, in short, considers that this support was the essential part of the transaction, and did not understand such withdrawal.

It must be said that there is a delightful bluntness in the fashion in which 'Joe' grapples with the difficulty. But see with what exquisite art *I* deal with the suppressed passage! 'The letter, when it came to us, was forwarded to the late Chief Secretary, and when the hon. and gallant baronet asked why we did not immediately check the hon. member for the city of Cork when he read the letter with-



out that passage—I have no right to speak for my colleagues, *but I imagine it was quite impossible that they should have recollected the existence of the sentence in a letter of that kind*, and certainly, as I said before, when the letter was read by the hon. member for Cork I had not the *slightest idea that it was from the same letter that any sentence had sought to be withdrawn.*’ Joe forgot it!

Captain O’Shea’s explanation of the omission was this rather halting one: ‘His only reason for expunging from the copy of Mr. Parnell’s letter the sentence referring to co-operation with the Liberal party was that he feared, if it came before the Cabinet, it might be misunderstood as a bid on the part of Mr. Parnell *for release*, and might therefore be injurious to the prospects of a settlement.’ Forster, on his part, stated that he had heard nothing of the ‘expunging’ of the paragraph. It was part of the contract as submitted to *him*.

Well, the negotiations having got to this happy conclusion, nothing remained but to sign, seal, and release. But Forster, who found it necessary to make notes when dealing with patriots, alone of all our Cabinet refused to accept the engagement. He had no faith in the promises of the patriots, and demanded something tangible as security. The rest of the Cabinet thought their word sufficient. Hence his resignation, With the sheerest folly he allowed the belief to go forth that he was absolutely against the release, and that he was for the continuance of coercion, as the ground of his resignation. Harcourt in justification said in his clumsy way, ‘We parted company simply because out of fourteen gentlemen one gentleman thought the assurance was not sufficient, and the

other thirteen thought it was. That is all the "infamy" of this wicked and mysterious transaction. It is said, "You are seeking to obtain the aid of those men to keep peace in Ireland." It shall be judged by this House and the country whether it is dishonourable to say, as I did the other day, and now say again, that in the present state of Ireland we will seek and desire the assistance of every man.' (A voice: 'Even Mr. Sheridan.') 'I know nothing of Mr. Sheridan. I never heard of him in my life; but if Mr. Sheridan, whoever he may be, will be on the side of peace in Ireland, I am very glad to have his assistance.'

Well, the release having taken place, by May 4th it had already given rise to a grave suspicion; reports went about that there had been a bargain, and as I held evidence, I was determined to let my new allies know they must now act publicly. Asked in the House, on May 4th, if any engagement as to withdrawing the 'No Rent' manifesto had been given by the leaders of the Land League, I made this reply:

'It appears to me that the intention entertained with regard to the No Rent circular formed a portion of the subject I have already adverted to when I said the Government had had information tendered to them which they deemed important, and which justified and prompted their action in the release. The considerations that made me refrain from entering into detail—and I believe it would be far more dignified just to leave it to *those gentlemen* themselves to make their own declaration—make me think that we should wait such declaration being made to the House by the persons to whose conduct such declaration refers.'

'Those gentlemen!' One of these 'gentlemen,' Dillon, promptly asked 'whether I meant to convey

that any information was conveyed to him by me in reference to the No Rent manifesto ?

‘I have not heard,’ was my reply, ‘the name of the hon. gentleman used in any information which has been conveyed to me.’

Sexton and O’Kelly put the same questions.

‘Mr. Gladstone : None of the names of any of the gentlemen who have spoken has been separately mentioned, but I am bound to say that I have received statements which appear to me to include *them*. (Loud cries of ‘Name.’)

‘Mr. Dillon : Have the statements included me ?

‘Mr. O’Kelly : Or me ?’

Mr. Parnell, coming in late, complained of being misrepresented by me, who had talked of his ‘release’ being made conditional on the ‘arrears’ question, etc. He denied that he had ever suggested or written as to his own release. On which, after some fencing, I was constrained to admit that ‘I perceive on consideration that the words I used, “upon release,” might have been taken to imply that the hon. gentleman had engaged or covenanted to do something on release. The information I received was that the hon. member looked to effect a settlement of the question of arrears on the basis of a gift.’

The discussion now took the shape of a vindication of Mr. Forster, as to his secession, in which the question of the release and consideration therefor was fully entered on. It was then that I made my declaration of ‘*No negotiation—no promise—nothing given—nothing taken.*’ All this was on May 4th, long before the unlucky letters had been discovered, and when it was believed the game of denial could be carried out with safety. Listen to me now. I confess

to you privately, I had no idea I had to deal with such bunglers, or that anything was to 'come out.' Speaking of Forster, I said :

'He (Forster) says he would have required a public undertaking. Now, what does that mean? That means that *we must have entered into an arrangement. That means that we must have gone to the cell in which, unhappily, an hon. member was at that time confined, and should have said to him, "We are not going to take exception to what we understand to be your sentiments, but we are going to require of you that you shall make a public undertaking."* Sir, we made no demand of that kind upon the hon. gentleman. (Ministerial cheers.) In my opinion it would have been a grave and serious error had we made such a demand. We desired to trust ourselves freely—notwithstanding the wide differences that have prevailed between us—freely to the honour and spirit of liberty, *the unrestrained liberty*, of the hon. gentleman and those with whom he acted.'

That is, *we* promised, and we trusted to him and to his honour for the doing of something in return. *We* bound ourselves, but *they* did not. So there was no bargain. And again :

'Well, we were in this position. We received information, upon evidence which we knew to be most trustworthy, and which conveyed to our minds the conclusions which I have described—viz., that were the intentions which, as I have said, the Government referred to on Wednesday week fulfilled, were they fulfilled by the distinct adhesion of the Government to the announcement made, a course would be taken which would obtain the object of my right hon. friend. What were we to do? One thing of two we

must have done. We must either have gone to Kilmainham and asked for an engagement—*we must either have gone to the hon. member for Cork and asked him for an engagement*, which my right hon. friend justly says he would have objected to doing, or else, having information as to the views of the Irish members, the member for Cork himself included, which gave to us the conviction I have described, we were still to have kept him in prison.’

You see I took care not to say a word of Parnell’s letter which had been shown to me, not a word of my own letters to O’Shea, of Forster’s demands, of the employment of Sheridan, of the memorandum, of Chamberlain’s demand of the forwarding Liberal business! And here, once more, the blunt ‘Joe’ Chamberlain compromised all.

‘The solution we had to arrive at was—*was this a bonâ fide statement that these gentlemen would be the friends of law and order in Ireland?* We were bound to satisfy ourselves upon that subject as well as we could, and we did satisfy ourselves, *and we did desire to know from the member for Clare that it did not pass in mere loose conversation*, but that the member for Cork should distinctly make that statement, and he did make it in the letter which he handed to the hon. member for Clare, and which was placed before us. The right hon. gentleman has asked for a frank explanation. I have made the explanation as frankly as I know how to make it.’

Frank, indeed! They were then all secure—‘cocksure,’ as it is called. The Irish members had been made safe, ‘nobbled,’ and now we can get our ‘Closure Bill’ through, and after that——

But now came the disastrous day of May 15th,



when, the rumours growing in strength, Puleston asked, would I produce the documentary evidence—evidence which he said was the justification or encouragement, not ‘consideration,’ for the release? ‘Not by any means,’ was the reply: on this high Parliamentary ground—it did not consist of letters passing between members—‘it would not fall under the rule’—‘it would tend to diminish the responsibility of Government.’ I would, of course, wish things to remain as they were, the Government having made ‘no engagement, no negotiation,’ while it might be insinuated still that the Parnellites had. I little expected that their chief would rise and read the letter out, with all its bids, offers, conditions! Never was there such a turn. Then all came out. Then Captain O’Shea, wishing to restore the credit of his party, brought out all his negotiations with Forster, and so on. The whole thing fell into confusion beyond hope of repair.

During the course of this scene it was asked, was that the only letter on the subject? I had to admit that, ‘as he spoke in the plural, there were, of course, other letters, but they did not in the least qualify what had been read.’ That is, the whole was before the House. It was then that Forster, as if to convict his late chief, on the instant asked ‘if the whole letter had been read;’ when the damning paragraph, the suppressed passage about *forwarding Liberal business*, had to be read—a trump card for Forster—and destroyed the game. The defence I had to make was a desperate one. It amounts to this—that at the time the ‘no negotiations’ were going on, neither the parties ‘knew’ that either the Arrears Bill or the release had been determined on. Listen to me:

‘He says that Mr. Parnell knew that the Government were going to release him. I call upon him to prove it. I deny it. *He had no shred or tittle of knowledge about his release until he was released.* What else did he know? He knew there was to be legislation on the arrears in the sense he desired? Again I meet Mr. Balfour with a flat denial. (Cheers.) Mr. Parnell knew nothing of the kind. The Government had decided nothing of the kind, and I affirm that when Mr. Parnell was released from prison he knew absolutely nothing of the intentions of the Government with respect to arrears, unless it was gathered from the speech made by me in the House of Commons—(loud cheers)—which expressly and absolutely reserved freedom to the Government to judge and decide for itself between the two methods of proceeding as to arrears. Well, sir, so much for what the hon. gentleman, the member for Cork, knew on his side. Now, I come to what we know on our side. Not one bit. Because everything depends upon the reciprocal knowledge. Now, sir, what did we know? The hon. gentleman says we knew there was to be peace in Ireland brought about through the hon. member for Cork. Sir, I would to God that I had known it! I certainly, if I had known it, would have gone a long way in consequence of it.’

This was weak. One man in prison formulates his demands, the prisoner haggles with him over them, the man is released, and the condition demanded is at once carried out!

Then, as to the suppressed, most awkward passage about forwarding Liberal business. That portion of the ‘no negotiation’ was submitted to me; I could not deny it. ‘Sir, as the hon. gentleman has said

this, I will read a few lines which were written by me upon first receiving the letter which was read last night, and I think I have a right to read my own words. They were written upon the spur of the moment—(hear, hear)—and addressed to my right hon. friend the late Chief Secretary. After discussing the substance of the letter of the hon. member for Cork, of which I took a view entirely different from that of my right hon. friend, I went on to use these words: “He”—that is Mr. Parnell—“then proceeds to throw in his indication or promise of future co-operation with the Liberal party. This is a proffer which we have no right to expect, and which I rather think we have no right at present to accept.” (Loud cheers, and counter-cheers.)

Triumphant point and triumphantly made! But wait. With some experience of my mode, I look at it closer and note the words—‘throw in his *indication* or promise of future support,’ and ‘at present.’ It was not distinct or positive enough, and for the moment would not do. Note, too, my remark on this letter to O’Shea which opened the ‘no negotiations.’

I was thus, I fear, made privy to every stage and incident in the transaction. I had corresponded with O’Shea, read Parnell’s letter, and prompted the suppression of an awkward passage. The memorandum ‘*had no connection with my knowledge of the view of the hon. member for Cork.*’ This morning I sent for the letter (here the right hon. gentleman produced it). It is long, interesting, and intelligible, setting forth the views of the hon. member (Mr. O’Shea) himself very largely upon the subject of Irish politics—what may be called burning Irish questions. I may say that it contains these words—“Mr. Parnell has no

part in the initiative this time." The meaning of these words is this—that during the discussion last year on the Land Bill my hon. friend came to me and made a proposal, the particulars of which I do not precisely remember; but he stated his belief, and that he had the authority of Mr. Parnell for conveying that belief, that such a proposal, if accepted, would have the effect of rendering the Land Bill completely acceptable. I told my hon. friend I would make the proposal known to my colleagues, and I did so. But we did not think it could be accepted, and it fell to the ground. This was the meaning of "this time."

As to the suppression of the passage about giving support to Liberal business, it is clear that Forster gave the Captain a rebuke for his maladroitness in having such things put in black and white, and Mr. O'Shea struck it out in consequence—officially, as it were. But was Joe Chamberlain so squeamish when it was shown to him? He said, by way of threat, that it would take very little to get up a sort of 'Irish-baiting' in the English towns, like the Jew-baiting in Germany (I fancy his caucuses would do it very soon). So they had best see about 'forwarding Liberal business,' and at once.

But there is another question. The release of Davitt, the virtuous patriot, took place at nearly the same time; and it occurred naturally to many that his enlargement might have been part of the contract. Any man of sense would conclude it had. I denied it: 'The first question was whether any other members of the Government had communicated directly or indirectly with Mr. Parnell? I am *not prepared to admit, as a matter of words, that I did directly or indirectly communicate with Mr. Parnell.* I should

think it would be a more correct phrase to say, "received information:" but, passing by that as a mere verbal matter on which we may differ, I believe it was mentioned last night by the hon. member for Clare that he had one or more conversations—I know not whether written communications also—on the same subject-matter with the President of the Board of Trade, *so far as my memory serves.*'

But as to members of the Cabinet? or to the particular member who negotiated? Captain O'Shea 'wished to say that he *did mention Davitt to Mr. Forster.* I did not give an account,' he adds, 'of the whole of the conversation.' Davitt, of the pistol—the meritorious ex-convict—is to be employed, it seems, as a probable pacificator, having such good credentials.

From that time forth I was plagued with questions from the Wolffs and others as to letters, suppressed letters, and the 'Treaty' itself. The first-named busy-body would ask 'whether there was any truth in the rumour current that there was another letter which had been submitted to the Cabinet with regard to the Kilmainham Treaty—('Oh,' and cheers)—a letter written by the hon. gentleman the member for Cork to the hon. gentleman the member for Longford?'

'Mr. Gladstone: The answers given by her Majesty's Government, and the course they have taken, have been uniform throughout. In the first place, I must say *that it is not very courteous on the part of the hon. baronet to speak of the Kilmainham Treaty, he knowing very well that I have many times denied that any treaty or understanding, or whatever else he may like to call it, exists between the Government and the hon. member for Cork.*'

'Sir H. Wolff asked the First Lord of the Treasury



whether, considering the interest excited by a recent political incident, he would consider it possible to lay upon the table the letter already cited in debate, addressed by him to the late Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant on learning the contents of the letter addressed by the member for Cork to the member for Clare, and the result of the conversation held by those two hon. members at Kilmainham?

‘Mr. Gladstone: I have had an opportunity of consulting with my colleagues as to the point involved in t’is question, and our opinion is that a precedent for producing a letter of a confidential character between colleagues in the Cabinet would be one of such great inconvenience, so uncompensated by any advantage, that we cannot agree to produce it. (Hear, hear.) The hon. gentleman may fairly say, “Why did we cite it?” (Hear, hear.) I need not say, of course, that in citing that letter I cited everything that related to the particular point touched on—namely, the *reference by the hon. member for Cork of his being at some undefined period in connection with the Liberal party.* The other part of the letter referred to a difference of opinion between myself and the right hon. gentleman the member for Bradford, and it appears to me that we are rightly exercising our discretion in declining to produce it for the reasons I have stated.’

But I must now conclude, and apply the closure to myself, or I shall exceed the portion of space allotted to me. Suffice it to say that I am pleased with you, Herbert. You will do, for you are beginning to learn the great arts of denying, qualifying, refining, ‘horn-taking,’ and the rest. Go on! *Macte!*

W. E. G.

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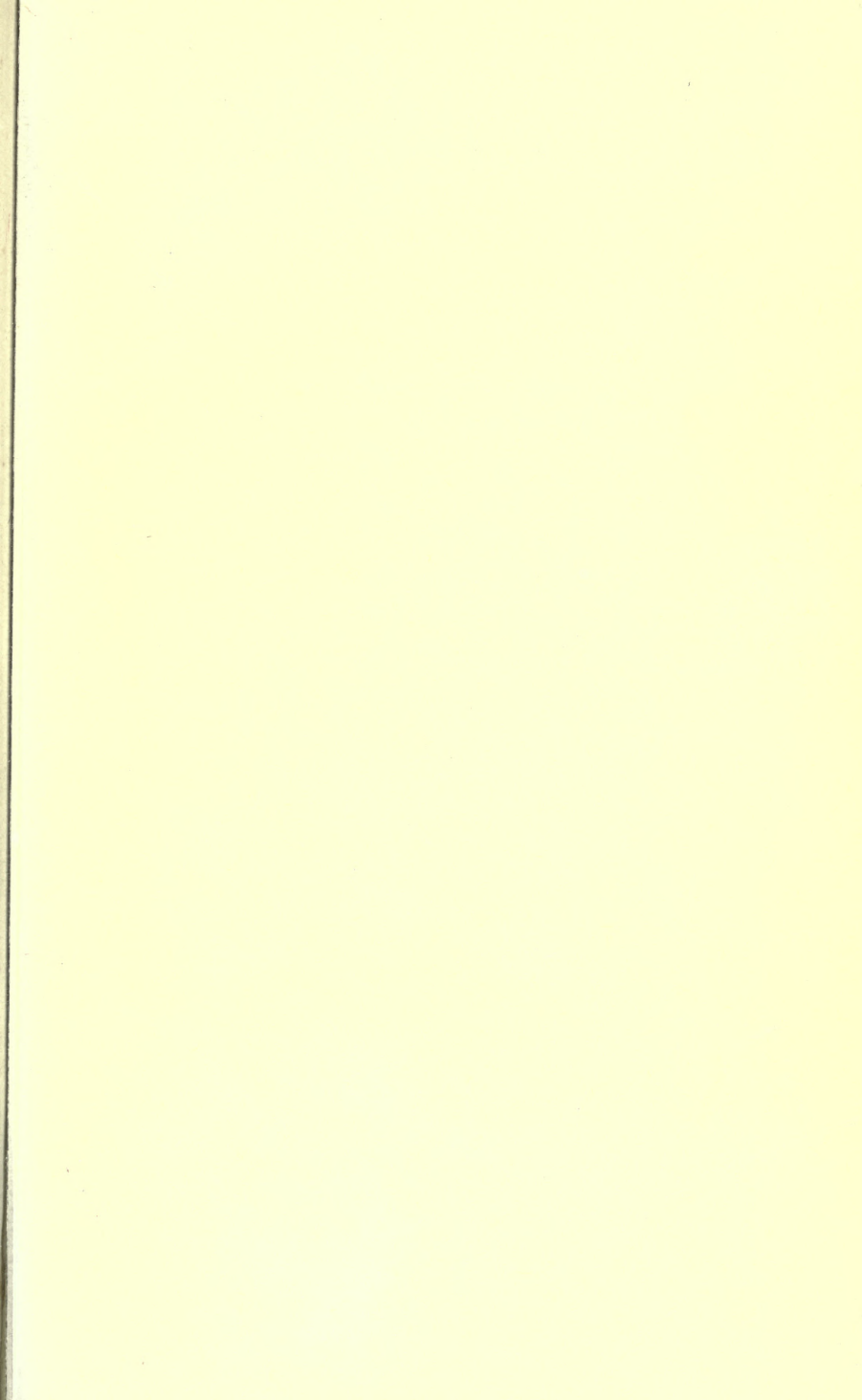
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